

NOTES ON THE EMPEROR TIBERIUS BASED  
ON A NEW INTERPRETATION OF TACITUS,  
ANNALES, 1.13-13 and IV.8-9

by

Gisels Kampff


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Notes on the Emperor Tiberius  
based on a new interpretation  
of Tacitus, Annales, I.11-13 and IV.8-9

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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by  
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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read  
and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for  
acceptance, a thesis entitled

Notes on the Emperor Tiberius  
based on a new interpretation  
of Tacitus, Annales, I.11-13 and IV.8-9  
submitted by Gisela Kampff, B.A., in partial fulfilment  
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## Abstract

A close reading of Ann. I.11-13 has convinced me that in the accession debate Tiberius was seriously proposing a new type of government along the following lines: The administrative and executive work of government would be handled by a senatorial "cabinet", while the Princeps, as supreme commander of the army and supreme guardian of the empire, would make certain from a higher, non-partisan level that the policy-making of the senate and the senatorial cabinet would not become injurious to the state. The more the wisdom of the senate should warrant it, however, the less need would there be for the ultimate authority of the imperial supreme guardian to show itself. The proposal, I think, is repeated in Ann.IV.8-9.

This interpretation of the two scenes illuminates certain aspects of Tiberius' character. The charges of hypocrisy on the one hand, and timidity on the other, which had been based chiefly on these scenes, would seem to be greatly weakened. The emperor, instead, would appear to have been not only a great statesman, but to have possessed a genuine insight into the forces that constitute the political strength of a nation and a singular greatness of soul, evident in the intention to withdraw from a position of autocratic power to one in which he would have to consider himself the more successful the less he needed to exercise his authority.

Tiberius was, however, unable to communicate his proposal to the senate, partly because of an unfortunate temperamental handicap, partly because of the irresponsiveness of the Fathers, whose manifest spiritual and political inadequacy prevented the attempt and even, it seems, the discussion of a restoration of the freedom they pretended to desire.





The Augustan directions regarding the succession, an unfortunate legal system, grave tragedies, and the emperor's own grave errors contributed to the frustration of Tiberius' efforts towards constitutional reform. As a result, the emperor, who left behind a peaceful and strengthened empire, left behind also a capital ready for tyranny. The failure to carry out his proposed constitutional reform rendered permanently ineffective the latent creative forces of the nation, for which the benevolent autocracy of the second century could be no substitute; the failure spelled the doom of the Roman empire.



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All quotations in Latin are from the text of H. Furneaux, The Annals of Tacitus, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 1896, although in my interpretation of Ann. I.13.2 I have adopted the emendations suggested by R. Syme in his article Marcus Lepidus, Capax Imperii, Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. XLV, 1955. I have made extensive use of Michael Grant's translation of the Annals, Tacitus on Imperial Rome, Penguin Books, 1956, but have adapted it freely.

Gisela Kampff



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## The historians of Tiberius

The character and the reign of the Emperor Tiberius have long represented a baffling and controversial problem. Of his three historians, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius, Tacitus has given us the most scholarly and systematic account, and there is general agreement that he is the most reliable, while both Suetonius and Dio must be used with caution. Suetonius seems to have been rather uncritical towards his sources, but details, which he has preserved, often confirm and supplement Tacitus' record. Dio Cassius, who wrote later, is thought to have made little or no use of the Annals and the Lives of the Caesars, but to have drawn on earlier historians who, if Tacitus knew them, at least were not his main sources. Dio, therefore, is valuable, because he shows that different versions of certain events existed, and he, too, furnishes details, which supplement the account of Tacitus. Both Dio and Suetonius give some information on the period where Tacitus fails us.

Tacitus' sources for the Annals consisted chiefly of primary documentary material and the works of earlier historians; occasionally, as Marsh points out, he seems to have been influenced by family traditions preserved in the great Roman houses.<sup>1)</sup> The strange thing about the Tacitean Tiberius is that the historian has given us a reliable factual record along with strongly biased interpretations. On the basis of his facts, corroborated by evidence from other fields of research, a historical Tiberius emerges, less sinister and more convincing than the Tacitean character; the incongruence - not yet fully sounded - is an interesting revelation of the mind of the author, whose own life and times are responsible for much that has entered into his literary re-creation of a historical personage.

The reasons for Tacitus' hostility to Tiberius are easy to understand. The reign of Tiberius was a period of transition, in which the so-called Republican principate of Augustus was



transformed into a tyranny. Like his contemporaries, Tacitus had little understanding of the working of economic and political trends and forces and was apt to explain the course of events by the personalities of the chief actors involved. He himself had experienced hateful despotism as a member of an abased senate, and in his reasoning, the shameful development which had begun under Tiberius must, therefore, be due to the wickedness of that emperor. Tacitus' findings from his research and his honest intentions failed to overcome his prejudices, and the prevalent tradition, which ascribed to Tiberius hypocrisy and dissimulation, provided a handy explanation for any discrepancies. Moreover, Tacitus lacked political and historical imagination and was unable to see explanations for Tiberius' conduct in external circumstances; these he found instead in personal motives - resentment, suspicion, old grudges, or else in secretiveness and deliberate ambiguity. He did not seem to realize that in the last years of the reign the political situation at Rome forced the emperor to act with severity; nor did he grasp that embitterment and suspicion in Tiberius' last years could be amply explained by the blows fate had dealt him. He conceived of character as a static and immutable thing and thus, like Suetonius and later Dio, he arrives at a depraved character gradually revealing itself.

It has been possible to correct some of Tacitus' interpretations with the help of his own testimony, honest even where it does not fit his theories. But the task of removing the Tacitean distortions to uncover the historical Tiberius half buried underneath proves an intricate problem. Opinions differ as to the extent to which Tacitus or his sources have obscured and suppressed historical facts by selective bias and misleading interpretations, and attempts at reconstruction have had widely varying results. A close reading of Annales, I.11-13 and IV.8-9



has convinced me that in these scenes Tacitus, under his comments, has suppressed certain facts, which his sources may have set forth more clearly. It is the aim of this essay to show how these facts, if my interpretation is correct, would throw new light on the character of Tiberius both as a man and as a statesman.





The constitutional situation at the time  
of Tiberius' accession

The ancient writers were correct when they said that during the reign of Tiberius the Republican principate of Augustus was transformed into oriental despotism, but they were very much mistaken in their explanations as to how this came about. Augustus, says Tacitus, imposed monarchy by military force on a freedom-loving people, and a cruel Tiberius, gradually tightening his hold, drove them to extreme servility. In reality, however, the tragedy was not that a single man imposed slavery on a mighty people, but that it was beyond the power of a single man to restrain a mighty people bent on slavery. For the constitutional situation, which faced Tiberius on his accession, was the result of a long and intricate historical development.

The Roman character and mind had been formed during many centuries of almost perpetual war, and when on the long period of expansion there followed at last peace and consolidation, the Romans were without constructive plans for welding all the acquired territories and peoples into a common weal. Baffled by the new conditions that were the result of their material advance, from the days of Cato the Elder to those of Tacitus, they turned in vain for help to the prisca virtus of their simple, outgrown past. The traditional abilities and virtues, which had qualified them to be pioneers, conquerors, and overlords, were no longer adequate for the task before them and were too intimately connected with attitudes of nationalism and imperialism, when a disinterested and humane approach was called for. The civil wars were a proof of the Roman failure to solve even the problems of Italy; consolidation of Roman power over a vast empire required, in addition, a thorough and planned integration of all its parts and a recognition that the good of the individual was bound up with the whole and <sup>that</sup> the good of the whole depended on the good of all individuals. Self-preservation demanded world-wide planning,



and the enormous frame-work presented a challenge for the achievement of progress and a betterment in human affairs, but the Romans did not rise to the opportunity. In accepting one-man rule they admitted their helplessness in the face of great events and new conditions, but autocratic authority and efficiency could not be a substitute for a general awareness of the aims of national endeavour and at length rendered the old creative forces ineffective through disuse.

Material advance without intellectual and spiritual growth had had a deteriorating effect on the Roman character. A spirit of hard commercialism, excessive self-indulgence, immorality, and unfeeling cruelty, all were the result of this development and expressions of a fundamental aimlessness. There existed, to be sure, a strong virtuous and humane element in the Stoics, but except for individual great Stoics holding high office, like Seneca or Marcus Aurelius, they were hardly an influence in public affairs; in general, their creed fitted them only to live uncontaminated in a world of evil, not to fight it or better it. Elements of virtue and elements of evil seem to have existed side by side, on the whole unaffected by each other. There may have been philosophizing and preaching, <sup>there was</sup> but <sup>there was</sup> evidently no discussion, fruitful of effort and progress. Existing ills in human society were accepted more or less unquestioned.

In this climate, the Romans never developed a public sense of social responsibility, and this deficiency, evident in many aspects of their national life, lay at the bottom of all their intricate problems. They refused serious solutions to the question of the "underprivileged" at home (preferring the palliative but treasury-draining panem et circenses); and upon the provinces they looked as exploitable estates of Rome. A lack of insight prevented the Roman political genius from giving the empire a sound social structure, which alone could have securely and permanently supported the political. As a result, a number of destructive trends arose, economic and social,



which led first to the collapse of the Republic and, finally, continuing in the course determined by their own antecedents, helped to bring about the ruin of Roman civilization. Two great errors, flagrant manifestations of the narrow and selfish mind of the Roman upper classes, furnished the conditions for the most decisive of these trends: the defeat of the Gracchi (and their spiritual kin), which made the proletariat a permanent feature and a dangerous source of volunteer recruits for long-term enlistment in a professional army, and the incredible - and fatal - mistake of allowing these volunteers, instead of the old conscript army, to fight Rome's wars, while at the same time failing to provide for them.

The army, which looked for compensation to its leader rather than the state, and the general with a devoted and powerful following at his disposal, quite naturally became an overwhelming political force, before which the increasingly inefficient and venal senatorial nobility had to give way. The development might have ended with the concentration of authority in the hands of Julius Caesar, who seems to have envisaged a unified and integrated empire and to have grasped the complex nature of the problems facing it. But the incompetent oligarchy resented the loss of its initiative and refused to tolerate what it did not understand. In his impatience to have done with corruption and inefficiency and to make the Roman empire what he envisioned it to be, Caesar was destined to be cut off by those who were unwilling to pay for efficiency and progress the price of the only liberty they knew. So it was Augustus, who finally brought the process to its logical conclusion by uniting in his person the supreme military and the supreme civilian authority under constitutional forms, which were the result of a compromise.

This compromise between the senate and Augustus consisted in the mutual observance of the fiction that the Princeps held his office through the constitutional delegation of supreme administrative, legislative, judicial, and military powers by







the senate and that his authority was thus based ultimately on the sovereignty of the Roman people and the laws. The universal exhaustion and desire for rest after the civil wars made for a generally favourable disposition towards this arrangement. Kingship was hateful to the Roman mind; but the Princeps was merely the chief magistrate, and Augustus was careful not to repeat Caesar's mistakes. His tactful observance of the constitutional fiction, his gracious ways, and later his venerable age made it easy for the senate to accept his authority, while he had earned the gratitude of the nation as a bringer of peace and prosperity. An important factor, finally, in consolidating his position, was Augustus' utilization of the traditional grading of Roman society by deepening the gulf between the classes and making promotion from one class to another dependent upon himself. "No man who had either political or social ambition could afford to offend the Princeps."<sup>1)</sup>

Thus, during the half century of Augustus' reign, the majority of men grew accustomed to thinking in fictitious constitutional terms and deceiving themselves about their purely external dignity. If regret for the Republic and their former independence did linger on among the higher aristocracy, it was without an understanding of the destructive and confusingly interrelated trends which had caused this development or of the ultimate reason, the shortcomings of Roman social and political orientation. While the throne was still being secured, there could be no pointing out of past mistakes for the Romans to discover where they had gone wrong and alert them to the demands of the present; as a result, they were unable to rise to a new rational approach, which would have been an essential condition for the restoration of independence. From the collapse of the Republic to the final reconciliation between Senate and Princeps in the second century, the chafing Republican spirit never produced a constructive program; on the whole it confined itself



to nostalgic talk, and occasional conspiracies never aimed at more than the replacement of one monarch by another.

The constitutional compromise worked well under Augustus, but its chief weakness became apparent at his death. Theoretically, the senate would be free to confer the proconsular and tribunician powers, on which his authority chiefly rested, upon some new Princeps of its choice or, by withholding them altogether, to terminate the compromise office. Augustus, and very likely the bulk of the senate itself, knew that it would mean courting renewed disaster for the state if the Fathers were allowed to exercise such discretionary authority. The Princeps, therefore, showed statesmanlike forethought in lining up a series of possible successors, but his wish to confine tenure of the Principate to his own house was small-minded, and the conditions at Eastern courts might have warned him about the dangers of the system. It is possible that Augustus envisaged future Principes as merely unifying figure-heads of a complex empire, who by their presence alone would keep the military and the civilian elements in balanced and loyal relation to each other and who would be relieved of the details of policy-making and administration by a staff of capable assistants<sup>2)</sup>. In that case a dynasty would have been adequate. But so long as the Princeps was both the supreme head of the state and in charge of the executive of government, it ought to have been, each time, the worthiest and most capable man that could be found, regardless of family and rank. Augustus' directions were to give rise to faction strife, intrigue, murder, and civil war; they were to place two madmen on the throne and to endanger gravely the new order that was his work, whereas confidence in the discretion of his successor might have led to a perpetuation of the method by which both he himself and Tiberius had been chosen and which was to give the second century its five good emperors.

When Augustus intended to found a dynasty, he was in accord with the best Roman tradition of family solidarity; but with the



elevation to the throne of his own descendants three generations later in mind, he showed a singular disregard for the natural human feelings and family ties of his more immediate relatives and friends. His first choice of an heir to the throne was the son of his sister, M. Claudius Marcellus, whom he married to his daughter Julia in 25 B.C. But Marcellus died two years later, and Augustus turned to his efficient aide and loyal friend, Agrippa, who was forced to divorce his wife, Marcella (though she was Augustus' own niece), and marry Julia; but Agrippa, too, died in 12 B.C. Since Agrippa's and Julia's sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, were too young to be considered, Augustus turned temporarily to Tiberius. He forced him to divorce his wife, Vipsania, and in turn to marry Julia, and conferred on him pro-consular imperium and tribunician power for five years; but it was evident that he intended him merely as a guardian for Gaius and Lucius Caesar until they should come of age. Shortly after, in 6 B.C., Tiberius, to Augustus' anger and everybody's surprise, asked leave to retire, ostensibly for reasons of health. He went to live at Rhodes as a private citizen, and only ten years later did an unexpected reversal of fortune return him to public life as the undisputed heir apparent.

The unsatisfactory situation, in which he had found himself as a mere locum tenens for the young princes, and the scandalous immorality of Julia, of which only Augustus was ignorant, were thought to have been Tiberius' real motives for his withdrawal; but it has been taken also - and by many writers primarily - as evidence of a morose nature, foreshadowing in a number of ways the emperor's later behaviour. It may be well, therefore, to review here Tiberius' life and manifestations of his character and personality, as reported by Suetonius, up to 14 A.D., when at fifty-six he mounted the throne.





## Tiberius' character and life up to his accession

After Augustus' somewhat scandalous marriage to Livia, the boy Tiberius had at first remained with his father, but after the latter's death, he entered the imperial household, at the age of nine. He received a good education and in due course held the prescribed offices of the cursus honorum, each before the required legal age. He was consul in 13 B.C. and again in 7 B.C. His military experience began in 27-24 B.C., as a tribune in Octavian's army in Spain. In 22-19 B.C. he accompanied Augustus in the East; then followed campaigns against the rebellious tribes in Gaul and against the Vindelici north of the Alps, in 12-9 B.C. the subjugation of Pannonia and Dalmatia, and then another campaign in Germany to stabilize Roman control between the Rhine and the Ems. Seven years later he conducted a successful campaign between the Weser and the Elbe; then came the suppression of the great rebellion of Dalmatia and Pannonia and, after the disaster of the Teutoburg Forest, a third trip to Germany, to make sure the Rhine defenses would not be overrun. The future emperor thus was thoroughly trained, and had given an excellent account of himself, both as an administrator and as a military leader.

The son of Tiberius Claudius Nero and Livia, Tiberius was doubly a Claudian, as Suetonius tells us<sup>1)</sup>, and following him, modern historians have placed much emphasis on the character traits evinced by earlier generations of Claudians. Tradition made them out to have been violent and haughty towards the common folk and unscrupulous and arrogant towards their rivals.<sup>2)</sup> Tacitus reports that at the time of Tiberius' accession, people were saying that he possessed the ancient ingrained superbia of the Claudian family<sup>3)</sup>; but according to the accounts of both Suetonius and Dio, no such trait had at that time become evident in Tiberius' character. The very fact of his retreat to Rhodes would seem to refute a charge of unscrupulousness and arrogance towards his rivals.





Apart from his ancestral heritage, another hypothetical factor has been allowed to colour - unduly, I think - the picture of Tiberius' character, namely his feelings of resentment. With his Republican aristocratic origin, he is thought to have felt a revulsion at his environment in the house of Augustus, his "aloof and austere" nature fitting ill into "the grace and ease and smooth perfidy of fashionable society"<sup>4</sup>). The shattering of his personal happiness in the interests of Augustus' dynastic policies, the ingratitude for the valuable service he gave and disregard for his real qualifications, as long as princes of Augustus' blood were still available, the slights and insults he had to endure during his exile at Rhodes, all are seen as causes of resentment; and from resentment to vindictiveness it is only a step. Tacitus repeatedly accuses Tiberius of brooding over his resentments and avenging himself after years had passed; but the charge does not stand up in a single case<sup>5</sup>).

The unfavourable views of Tiberius' character seem to have been due largely to his deportment and manner, a mixture of aristocratic reserve and blunt directness, which was bound to give additional offense whenever Tiberius' attitude towards some issue turned out to be essentially different from that of those with whom he had to work. Augustus, in his letters to Livia, had complained about his stepson's disposition - de acerbitate et intolerantia morum eius<sup>6</sup>). Augustus' own deliberately conciliatory policy towards the senatorial nobility had been rendered more effective by his gracious ways, but compromise and conciliation of the senate had proved a hindrance to good government, particularly in the senatorial provinces, and Augustus, although he was a diplomat, was probably also a sound judge of values. That he was able to discern the qualities that counted, beneath an exterior too harsh for his taste, seems to be proved by the fact that he was not deterred from choosing Tiberius rather than the affable Germanicus. Pliny calls Tiberius tristissimum, ut constat, hominum<sup>7</sup>), and it is hardly surprising that the blows of fate had not left him a happy man;



but low spirits, easily explained by frequent sorrow and disappointment, a silent reserve, and caution towards an insincere environment have been twisted, somewhat rashly, I think, into a permanent moroseness<sup>8)</sup>, cheerless austerity<sup>9)</sup>, and even a grim and inclement<sup>10)</sup> character. On the basis of the accounts of Suetonius and Dio Cassius - unless we insist on seeing in the fact of Tiberius' retirement an expression of moroseness - there is up to his accession no evidence of an innate gloominess and a brooding element in his character.

Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio, all say that Tiberius was secretive, dissimulative, and hypocritical; some modern historians are inclined to agree, at least to a certain extent. "He had lived in the coldest shade of neglect, as well as in the full sunshine of flattery, and could rate the homage of senate and people at its proper worth", says Furneaux; but when he concludes that "he had been schooled for years in repression and disguise"<sup>11)</sup> up to his fifty-sixth year, according to Suetonius, Tiberius does not seem to have exhibited these qualities. The contradiction that the same character should have been secretive and hypocritical on the one hand, and blunt to the point of tactlessness on the other, has been resolved by most writers through the explanation that, in spite of his blunt manner, Tiberius was forced to play the somewhat hypocritical rôle demanded of the emperor by the very nature of the principate<sup>12)</sup>.

M.P. Charlesworth in the Cambridge Ancient History alleges that Tiberius had a subaltern and diffident mind<sup>13)</sup>. Furneaux explains practically his whole life by the presence of these qualities<sup>14)</sup>. But hesitant, diffident, and subaltern characters do not become outstanding military leaders, and Suetonius explicitly describes Tiberius as a self-reliant general of independent judgment<sup>15)</sup>.

Beneath the acerbitas, for which he was criticized by Augustus, Tiberius apparently was a warm-hearted and in a deeper sense kind and considerate man. Tiberius accompanying his



brother's coffin, walking on foot all the way from Germany to Rome<sup>16)</sup>, Tiberius meeting his former wife, in the moving scene described by Suetonius<sup>17)</sup>, those are glimpses of a sensitive and sympathetic character. While Augustus' interest in him was solely from a raison d'état point of view, Livia, at this stage, apparently was not able to give him much moral support. There is no evidence that she attempted to mediate, when she saw her son abandoning his career for a self-imposed exile; at least she might have opened Augustus' eyes to the immoral conduct of Julia. Had Tiberius been vindictive, he himself might have done so; nothing was more certain to hurt the high-handed Princeps who, with all his genial personality, had no qualms about wrecking the happiness of relatives and friends in the interests of his own dynastic plans. Augustus' tact exhausted itself in the niceties of polite society; Tiberius, I think, showed a truer kindness of heart.

Augustus' promotion of Gaius and Lucius Caesar as heirs apparent embarrassed Tiberius in his public position. Even if he had no intention of entering into a rivalry for the succession to the imperial throne, factions were bound to form around the young princes and possibly around himself, who was manifestly better qualified for the task, and he would have to move with the utmost caution; even the honour and glory that his services and achievements would bring, in making him more conspicuous, would add to the embarrassment. Tiberius, apparently without complaining, merely asked permission to withdraw. Augustus, who cannot have been wholly ignorant of the awkwardness of Tiberius' situation (which had arisen once before in the case of Agrippa and Marcellus), made no attempt to remedy it. He tried to force Tiberius to stay by publicly complaining in the senate; Tiberius went on a hunger strike. His departure as described by Suetonius seems to indicate a state of great depression<sup>18)</sup>. The alternatives would have been either to assert himself, for which he had no desire, or else to acquiesce in an untenable situation, which sooner or later was bound to get him into trouble.





Suetonius' account of Tiberius' unassuming behaviour at Rhodes, and especially on the occasion of his visit to the local sick<sup>19)</sup>, would seem to refute the charge of haughtiness. (Neither, I think, does his bedside visit sound like the act of a morose person.) We learn later that Lucilius Longus, a senator of humble origin and Tiberius' comrade in good and evil fortune, had shared his exile; when he died, he received a state funeral and a statue in the Forum Augusti, in recognition of his friendship.<sup>20)</sup>

The whole of Tiberius' sojourn at Rhodes does not read like the way of life of a gloomy and withdrawn man. He constantly attended the schools and lecture rooms, often without a lictor or a messenger, and exchanged courtesies with the good people of Rhodes - prope ex aequo.<sup>21)</sup> He carried on his exercises with horses and arms, until he had reason to fear that this was causing suspicion.<sup>22)</sup> He contented himself with a modest house and a villa in the suburbs not much more spacious - it all sounds more like a simple, healthful life, with time for scholarly interests and contacts, than one of cheerless austerity lived by a brooding and secretive introvert. There is no mention of secret vices in Suetonius and Dio, during Tiberius' stay at Rhodes.<sup>23)</sup> When he was informed by Augustus that he was being slandered and accused of seditious activities, he asked for an imperial observer to keep watch on what he did and said.<sup>24)</sup> Granted that this would have been an obvious move, had there been any ground for suspicion; but Tiberius probably understood from Augustus' candour that his loyalty was not really in doubt. To affirm it, he made his request for an observer, as a gesture - a gesture, which he might perhaps not have made so insistently, if he had been intent on the pursuit of secret vices.

The Thrasyllus episode in Tacitus<sup>25)</sup>, which appears in slightly different versions in Suetonius<sup>26)</sup> and Dio<sup>27)</sup>, has been shown to go back to a lost archetype of a tale demonstrating the infallibility of the astrological science.<sup>28)</sup> Krappe points out that "to suppose that the citizens (of Rhodes) would have





tolerated a wholesale slaughter of Greeks at the hands of a private individual and an exile, who was moreover known to be in disfavour on the Palatine, is to suppose an absurdity". Thrasyllus was, however, a historical personage and a member of Tiberius' circle at Rhodes. Tacitus may have found the episode already linked with Tiberius. He includes it in the midst of his account of the Reign of Terror, where a few more murders fit well into the general atmosphere. Side by side with the anecdotes, which Suetonius has to tell about Rhodes, it would have stood out clearly as a fictitious story<sup>29)</sup>.

Although Tiberius had been given the official title of ambassador, Augustus had so obviously withdrawn his friendship and support, that his position at Rhodes became positively dangerous, especially when his tribunician powers expired. When in 2 B.C. he learned of Julia's banishment, Tiberius urged a reconciliation between father and daughter, but welcomed the news of his divorce, and since the succession of Augustus' grandsons seemed now assured, he requested permission to return to Rome. He missed his family and had even gone to Samos to greet Gaius Caesar, then on his mission to the East, but had found that Marcus Lollius, Gaius' mentor, had influenced the young man against him. Augustus refused Tiberius' first request for permission to return and, if we may believe Suetonius, finally made his consent dependent on the concurrence of Gaius. The prince agreed - verum sub condicione ne quam partem curamve rei publicae attingeret<sup>30)</sup>. The remark seems to illuminate the situation from which Tiberius had withdrawn.

He returned in 2 A.D. and lived at Rome as a private citizen until, upon the death of the young princes in 2 and 4 A.D. respectively, he was recalled by the emperor and his candidacy for the throne revived. He was now adopted by Augustus<sup>31)</sup> and invested with tribunician powers for the second time. Although he had a son of his own, he was forced at the same time to adopt Germanicus, the son of his brother Drusus, in whose children the



direct descendants of Augustus would eventually come to the throne. The outstanding service which Tiberius gave after his return, especially in the German and Illyrian campaigns, and his demonstration of ability and loyalty seem to have brought about a genuine and complete reconciliation with Augustus, judging from the apparently authentic letters quoted by Suetonius. In 13 A.D. Tiberius' tribunician powers were renewed again; he became in effect co-regent and seems to have largely directed affairs for the aged Augustus<sup>32)</sup>.



### The accession debate

When the moment came, both Livia and Tiberius acted with resolute efficiency. Two pieces of news became known simultaneously: Augustus was dead, and Tiberius was in control. Tiberius immediately gave the watchword to the Guard as its commander. He took on the trappings of a court, such as personal bodyguards and men-at-arms, and sent letters to the armies as though he were already emperor. If Tacitus has reported his various steps in the correct order, he seems to have arranged immediately also for the swearing of allegiance, beginning with the consuls, the commander of the Guard and the controller of the grain supply, and finally the senate, the army, and the public. While thus engaged in securing his position, Tiberius learned of the murder of Agrippa Postumus. Whatever the respective shares of Livia, Augustus, and Sallustius Crispus in this deed, Tiberius' apparently sincere intention to submit the matter to the senate for investigation seems to me proof of his innocence. Tiberius then summoned the senate by virtue of his tribunician power for a first meeting, solely to discuss Augustus' funeral and to have his will read. After the funeral, the senate met again for the formal inauguration of the new emperor. It was a strange meeting.

In Tacitus' account, Tiberius begins<sup>1)</sup> by talking about the magnitude of the task of government and his own modestia, which I translate, with Michael Grant, as "unpretentiousness" rather than Furneaux's "diffidence". Tiberius goes on to say that the task is too great and too complex to be handled by one person. Only the mind of the divine Augustus had been equal to so great a responsibility; he himself, when summoned by Augustus to share his labours, had learned by experience how difficult, how much subject to the vicissitudes of fortune was the work of governing the empire. He then asks that this task be undertaken by several men: ... in civitate tot inlustribus viris subnixa non ad unum





omnia deferrent: plures facilius munia rei publicae sociatis laboribus exsecuturos<sup>2)</sup>.

Tacitus at this point explains that Tiberius was never a ready speaker and that, through his effort to conceal his real intentions, his words became more and more equivocal and obscure - in incertum et ambiguum implicabantur<sup>3)</sup>. Both Tacitus and Suetonius interpret the scene as a farce. Both agree that the Fathers then implored Tiberius to accept the sole rule, and Tacitus says they were driven to do so by fear of being detected in having seen through the farce.

Tiberius then had certain documents produced and read, compiled and written out by Augustus and giving lists of the national resources, taxation and expenditure, numbers of troops in army and navy, and statistics concerning provinces and dependent kingdoms. These were clearly intended to illustrate the magnitude of the task and the necessity for a division of functions. But the effect of the recital was simply to make the senators persist in their abject appeals to Tiberius to take on the heavy burden alone, and the emperor at last, reluctantly, gave in.

Modern commentators have found widely varying interpretations of Tiberius' behaviour. Furneaux thinks that he was naturally diffident and that at this critical moment his courage forsook him; he hesitated to mount the throne, and his hesitation was genuine<sup>4)</sup>. Marsh thinks, Tiberius was merely trying, after the manner of Augustus, to keep up the constitutional fiction, which emphasized conferment by the senate, and that he was perhaps holding back longer than was necessary<sup>5)</sup>. Smith thinks that Tiberius was waiting for some more substantial proposal on the part of the Fathers "that would impart the appearance of constitutional legitimacy comparable with that enjoyed by Augustus" and at the same time would be "an expression of confidence and constitutional sanction which (Tiberius) desired far more than empty titles"<sup>6)</sup>. One view, which I take from a footnote<sup>7)</sup>, is that Tiberius honestly wanted to restore the Republic.





The attitude of the senate also has been explained in different ways:

That the Fathers really believed they were seeing through a farce and thought flattery the safest course in a situation which could not be changed in any case<sup>8)</sup>;

that the senators did not want to co-operate in any "dyarchy"; "They refused to accept responsibility for what they did not really control... rather than a sham independence they chose to have no independence at all;"<sup>9)</sup>

that they honestly considered Tiberius the outstanding candidate to continue the Principate, and that they would probably have elected him emperor in any case.<sup>10)</sup>

My own view is that the senate probably began by making some kind of formal acknowledgement of the new emperor and resorted to abject appeals only after Tiberius' proposal of a new form of government which, judging from their agitated behaviour, the senators must have found highly disturbing. Both Tacitus' and Suetonius' account of his proposal give the impression that Tiberius was suggesting either to withdraw completely from any ruling position, or else to share his ruling position with a number of equal colleagues. Considering Rome's recent history and the careful measures taken by both Augustus and Tiberius to consolidate imperial rule, such a proposal does seem both unrealistic and insincere and is easily interpreted as a diplomatic manoeuvre, but a close reading of this scene - and Tiberius' subsequent policy - convinces me that, while he did make his proposal in complete sincerity, he did not make it in the form in which it was understood by the senate and in which Tacitus seems to represent it.

The reaction of the senators may have been due to a variety, and a combination, of reasons; but I think the majority of them were so upset by Tiberius' speech, because they really feared that he intended, or pretended to intend, a withdrawal from both throne and government, leaving the state "without a head" and allowing



a situation to arise similar to that from which Augustus had rescued Rome not too long before. I think, Tiberius was too great a statesman even to consider such a possibility; he was offering, I think, to withdraw from the administrative and executive business of government, but certainly not from the throne, as the measures he had already taken make clear. He was making a statesmanlike proposal, but the senate failed to respond, largely for the simple reason that the exact nature of that proposal was not understood.

Tacitus' account as well as that of Suetonius give the impression of an ill-prepared meeting, where a debate on an important issue is allowed to deteriorate into an undignified wrangle. After the reading of the documents, Tiberius makes an unsuccessful attempt to explain himself. While the senators are pouring out their appeals, dixit forte Tiberius se ut non toti rei publicae parem, ita quaecumque pars sibi mandaretur, eius tutelam suscepturum.<sup>11)</sup> Asinius Gallus then asks: "interrogo... Caesar, quam partem rei publicae mandari tibi velis."<sup>12)</sup> Whereupon, after a brief silence - according to Tacitus, perculsus improvisa interrogatione - Tiberius replies that nequaquam decorum pudori<sup>13)</sup> suo legere aliquid aut evitare ex eo, cui in universum excusari mallet.<sup>14)</sup> If Tacitus is quoting him literally, Tiberius is almost contradicting himself here; he has just declared himself ready to undertake any part assigned to him and in his next answer emphasizes that he would prefer to be excused from any share in the work of government. Tacitus represents this as merely part of the whole farce; superficially, it might be taken as a blunder in a discussion that had got out of hand.

My own view is that the contradiction is only apparent. The brief silence occurred because Tiberius saw that he had not been understood and was struggling for the right words to become more explicit in his novel constitutional proposal to the suspicious senate. If he really made the statement on quaecumque pars in the form given by Tacitus and Suetonius, I think, it must have been because he expected confidently to be assigned the one part



which, out of a universally understood necessity, he had already taken upon himself, namely the army and the supreme guardianship of the empire. Since events had already placed him in this lofty position, he had good reason to expect that a senate, which seemed to be demonstrating its devotion so emphatically, would readily and without prompting confirm him in this obvious part.

For the army had become and must continue to be the responsibility of the emperor; he must keep it out of politics and consequently had best stay out of politics himself, and Tiberius, realizing this, was ready to let other outstanding members of the senate handle the executive tasks of government. They would settle courses of action, devise procedure, and administer government; his own participation would consist in watching, from a higher, non-partisan level, that the policy-making of senate and senatorial officials would not once again become injurious to the empire. Conceivably, during a transition period, he might continue to discharge, in addition to the supreme guardianship, some portion of the administrative duties, and his quaecumque pars may also be understood as suggesting this. But his second remark, protesting that he in universum excusari mallet, contains, I think, the basic principle of his idea. Suetonius makes him ask for plures<sup>15)</sup>, which has been translated as "colleagues", but he could not mean partners in government on an equal footing. Constitutionally, the group of senatorial helpers would have to be the political head of the state, while the emperor would be a non-political head above them. Dio's version of the proposed division of the empire may be ignored, but his version of Tiberius' answer to Asinius Gallus is intelligible when read in this light: "How can the same man both make the division and choose?"<sup>16)</sup> Tiberius would be the supreme authority at the top, to make the division and allocate the sections; but choosing any one section for himself would place the emperor practically, if not in theory, on an equal level with his ministers, and this, particularly in the absence of any constitutional precedent, could not fail to





have dangerous consequences: The arrangement would remove him from the position of supreme authority; it would weaken him personally as well as the imperial house and would bring back all the dread possibilities of a Triumvirate. And why, then, had he and Augustus made such careful arrangements for the succession, for generations ahead, if he intended to supersede the monarchy by an elected group? He is reputed to have been a slow and deliberate man, who presumably would not have changed his mind so easily where the abrogation of his predecessor's directions and the abjuration of his own pledge were involved. I rather get the impression that Tiberius had in mind a constitutional arrangement much like that adopted by certain modern constitutions, distinguishing between a political cabinet at the head of affairs and subject to change in accordance with requirements, and a non-political, permanent, supreme head of the state and supreme commander of the army, to guarantee stability.

Tiberius had seen, and understood, the national situation from two opposite angles. It was from the ruler's point of view that he had become acquainted with those intricate problems for which, at the moment, one-man rule seemed the only effective solution. But he was also a descendant of old Republican stock, and his childhood experiences had been intimately connected with the final phase of the Republican struggle against autocracy. It was only natural that the ideas and ideals, in the name of which that struggle was fought, should have impressed themselves deeply upon the young Tiberius' mind, producing an abiding belief in the principles of civic freedom and senatorial government<sup>17)</sup>, and a recognition of the permanent validity of these principles as opposed to the temporary expedience of employing autocracy in order to extricate the nation from an involved and perplexing predicament. Augustus had accomplished the extricating part; Tiberius now proposed to tackle the next stage, that of reverting from a constitutional arrangement that had developed under a national emergency to a state of normalcy and genuine senatorial government, while eliminating the old hazards of a misguided use





of such freedom. If this was the meaning behind Tiberius' proposal, it would seem evidence of a twofold greatness. Intellectually, he had conceived the practical way, the constitutional devices,<sup>18</sup> with the help of which a true national revival might be achieved, while a rare greatness of soul enabled him to propose to withdraw from a position of autocratic power to one in which he would have to consider himself most successful if he never needed to exercise his authority at all.

The senate discussion as described by Tacitus and Suetonius seems to me to indicate clearly that Tiberius had neglected to acquaint the Fathers beforehand with his proposal, either from sheer lack of parliamentary skill or perhaps because he did not think preparation necessary for a proposal so admirably suited to the situation that it needed no recommendation. All the angles of the question were known to the senators as well as to Tiberius himself. The one safeguard which had to be taken, as responsible men would realize immediately, was to keep the army out of the political arena, and this he had already done. No individual, no faction, could use the army to cause internal disturbance; its task was to protect the frontiers and to maintain order, and Tiberius as supreme commander would judge when and how to use it. There could have been no better starting position for a return to senatorial government<sup>19</sup>). The offer to hand over the work of government to those whose ancient domain it was and to protect them, at the same time, from that cardinal problem, which the emperor himself aptly described as holding a wolf by the ears<sup>20</sup>), ought to have been greeted with unmitigated joy. Yet the meeting was a failure, because, unprepared, the Fathers failed to grasp what was being offered to them.

I think the critical misunderstanding occurred at this point. Tiberius had told Asinius Gallus that he would not choose any functions of government for himself, because he preferred to be excused from the administrative and executive work of government altogether. But apparently he neglected to set forth



explicitly the arrangement he had in mind, or was prevented from doing so by the excited shouts of the men. He may have found it too difficult to phrase it in a way that would not offend the touchy and already agitated senators, or he may have thought they would presently understand the distinction he was making between the supreme authority, which he did not mean to give up, and the actual work of government, which he was offering to hand back to those whose traditional occupation it had always been. In any case, the moment, when Tiberius should have explained himself, passed in the general agitation of the Fathers, and Asinius Gallus, concluding that he had made a mistake, promptly tried to straighten it out: non idcirco interrogatum ait, ut divideret quae separari nequirent, sed ut sua confessione argueretur, unum esse rei publicae corpus atque unius animo regendum. addidit laudem de Augusto Tiberiumque ipsum victoriarum suarum quaeque in toga per tot annos egregie fecisset admonuit<sup>21)</sup>. L. Arruntius then spoke, but Tacitus does not record what he said<sup>22)</sup>, being too much concerned with the explanation of the hostile feelings Tiberius is supposed to have harboured against these two men. This leads up to another point, which I think has been misunderstood by Tacitus' modern commentators and, possibly, by Tacitus himself.

Quippe Augustus supremis sermonibus cum tractaret, quinam adipisci principem locum suffecturi abnuerent aut inpares vellent vel idem possent cuperentque, M'. Lepidum<sup>23)</sup> dixerat capacem sed aspernantem, Gallum Asinium avidum et minorem, L. Arruntium non indignum et, si casus daretur, ausurum.<sup>24)</sup> It seems that this is generally taken to mean that Augustus was warning Tiberius of possible pretenders to the throne. If that was Augustus' purpose, however, he certainly showed remarkable care in grading these possible rivals according to their suitability for a position, from which they were to be kept away, by including not only those who inpares vellent but even those who suffecturi abnuerent. The latter, it would surely seem, could not represent a very great danger! Those who were suitable but unwilling to usurp the throne, and those who were willing but incapable, needed to be taken





seriously only if they had a substantial following, and of this there is no mention. The other possibility, that Augustus was considering alternatives to Tiberius, is, I think, entirely out of the question. He had indicated, by his adoption of Tiberius and by conferring tribunician power upon him, that he wished him to be his immediate successor. He had further indicated, by compelling Tiberius to adopt Germanicus, that he wished, eventually, to bring his own descendants to the throne. He obviously had confidence in Tiberius' co-operation, and the situation at the moment seemed well under control. Why then should he in supremis sermonibus consider, or worry about, other possibilities?

Evidently, Tacitus had before him several sources for his account, giving at least two versions: pro Arruntio quidam Cn. Pisonem tradidere.<sup>25)</sup> Hence it would seem that there actually had been a discussion (and a leakage), in which these men had been considered with a view to their suitability for principem locum, but princeps locus, I venture to suggest, here, perhaps, does not mean the imperial throne, about the occupancy of which there was never any doubt between the dying and the acceding emperor. I should like to advance the suggestion instead that the expression here might possibly mean the first place at the head of affairs occupied by the group of men placed in charge of the divided functions of government, i.e. in modern terms, by ministers forming a cabinet.<sup>26)</sup> With this meaning of princeps locus, the careful classification according to suitability becomes a logical procedure; those who inpares vellent and those who suffecturi abnuerent are familiar categories on lists of candidates whenever an important position has to be filled.<sup>27)</sup> The categories "fit but unwilling", "willing but unfit", and "fit and willing" seem to me rather more plausible on a list of candidates for office than on a list of potential usurpers of a throne. Presumably the legitimate occupant of the throne would be primarily interested in the degree of danger that his suspected rivals presented, and I should think that his list would be more likely to contain



annotations relevant to that danger rather than comments on his rivals' suitability for the rule, once they had dislodged him. Moreover, if Augustus and Tiberius had had a discussion about a possible division of the work of government into "departments"<sup>28)</sup>, then nothing, in my view, could have been more natural in that connection than a tentative scrutiny of eminent senators, who might be placed in charge.

If such a group of senators had been intended to replace the emperor as supreme authority, then Augustus need not have gone to the trouble of arranging the succession to the throne for generations ahead. It seems to me clear and plausible that, in their discussion, Augustus and Tiberius envisaged a group of able men, to take charge of the business of government, politically at the head of affairs, but constitutionally below the emperor, whose presence, while allowing superior minds to use their initiative, would at the same time prevent a recurrence of that trend which, beginning with Marius and ending with Augustus, had been the chief factor in the collapse of the Republic: the army would be bound to the emperor as the ultimate, non-political authority in the state, as an ultimate, non-political source of power to the state.

I find it difficult to believe that Tacitus' sources should not at least have alerted him to apprehend some genuine and sincere plan on the part of Tiberius behind even a defective or garbled account.<sup>29)</sup> The fact alone that the discussion of the two emperors regarding possible candidates for principem locum is mentioned in the same scene as the proposed division of government functions goes far to suggest a connection, though it is not evident; but for Tacitus, who set out to prove a tyrant responsible for a degraded situation, it would have been fatal to bring this out clearly, and that at the very beginning of the Annals. Tiberius was offering to relinquish his influence in day to day policy-making in favour of those who claimed they were longing for this opportunity. At the same time he would protect them





from their own errors by removing the threat of an army turned into a political force - a dread experience for generations of Romans and the overwhelming reason for Rome's acceptance of one-man rule. No more favourable offer could have been made to the Republican spirits. If they turned out to be the ones who had failed to seize a unique opportunity, Tacitus' conception was wrong. Evidently, here as elsewhere, he realized that the facts were inconsistent with his theory, but as always, he has recourse to his psychological explanations. At this crucial point, where there were, quite possibly, enough facts in his sources to speak for themselves, Tacitus, by his interpretive comments, has managed to obscure them to the point where they merely help to convey an impression of awkward pretence breaking down in blunder, and the remarks quoted seem to have no factual but only psychological significance. That cannot have been all that Tacitus' sources should have conveyed to him!

Asinius Gallus, having pointed out that the state, being a whole, must be governed by one mind and having added sufficient praise of Tiberius as a soldier and as a civilian, had succeeded in again setting Tiberius up as the sole candidate for the task, and the proceedings were now back where they had started, with the Fathers several degrees more nervous. Apparently, there was no discussion of Tiberius' own proposal and arguments. Among the renewed appeals of the senators, Suetonius mentions two verbatim remarks. One senator said: "Aut agat aut desistat!"<sup>30)</sup> and another taunted Tiberius with ceteros quod polliciti sint tarde praestare, sed ipsum, quod praestet tarde polliceri.<sup>31)</sup> Tacitus reports Q. Haterius as asking: "Quousque patieris, Caesar, non adesce caput rei publicae?"<sup>32)</sup> All of these comments would seem to show that the senators believed to have understood two things, namely, that in spite of Tiberius' suggestion, the debate had established that the task of government was indivisible; and secondly, that the only candidate under consideration for the job was Tiberius. The possibility of a distinction between throne and government was not grasped; resigning from the one meant



resigning from the other, and whatever the feelings towards Tiberius, leaving the state "without a head", without emperor= government, was quite naturally considered disastrous.

It is conceivable that Tiberius' suggestion of a senatorial, political "group-head" of the state under an imperial, non-political, individual head of the state was grasped, but immediately and quietly rejected through a stubborn denial of discussion by a rigid Republicanism, which would see in such an arrangement merely a sophisticated extension of the idea of dyarchy, by which Republican hopes would not be advanced a whit. But I do not believe that this was the case; had there been any indication of such a feeling, Tacitus would most likely have exploited a sentiment which fitted his theories so well. Instead he makes the senators, who supposedly regret their Republican freedom, grovel at the feet of the tyrant, imploring him to continue the tyranny. I think that failure to understand the unexpected and apparently not clearly propounded proposal explains the scene. The confusion and the agitated remarks ring true. Tiberius "did not get it across".

The last remark in Tacitus' account is that of Scaurus, spem esse ex eo non inritas fore senatus preces, quod relationi consulum iure tribuniciae potestatis non intercessisset.<sup>33)</sup> The oblique reference to Tiberius' tribunician power was relevant and significant. If Tiberius by "being excused from the duties of government" had meant that he would relinquish his imperial position, then renunciation of his tribunician power would have been an obvious first step. That he did not propose it is a technical detail which seems to confirm my view.

Then, fessusque clamore omnium, expostulatione singulorum flexit paulatim, non ut fateretur suscipi a se imperium, sed ut negare et rogari desineret.<sup>34)</sup> Suetonius quotes him as saying: "Dum veniam ad id tempus quo vobis aequum possit videri dare vos aliquam senectuti meae requiem."<sup>35)</sup> These words have been interpreted as an attempt to introduce "at least a semblance of time



limitation on the powers he was exercising"<sup>36)</sup>, but I think the remark might also be taken as supporting my interpretation of the whole scene. It seems to make better sense when taken as referring to the eventual relief from burdensome business, but appears highly insincere if applied to the relinquishing of a throne for the occupancy of which arrangements had already been made for the next two generations. If Tiberius was speaking of abdication, surely at this stage, if not earlier, a reference to Germanicus would have been in order, if he did not wish to give the appearance that the directions of the only recently deified Augustus were already being ignored. We may absolve the emperor of hypocrisy, if we accept the explanation that the only office from which he expected to seek repose and which he was placing at the disposal of the senate was the administration of government, not the supreme authority.

So the motion of the consuls, to which Mamercus Scaurus was referring and which, it is assumed, confirmed Tiberius in all the constitutional powers Augustus had held, apparently was passed. It was to have decisive significance.





### Tiberius' government

The senators may have thought, after that strange inauguration meeting, that they had merely perpetuated a constitution which, if it was not entirely to their liking, at least guaranteed peace, safety, and prosperity. In reality, they had changed the character of that constitution. The manner in which a new Princeps had been practically imposed upon them had already shown which of the partners in the dyarchy had the power; the manner in which the Fathers had received the new Princeps had been a virtual acknowledgement of that power. Their refusal to discuss Tiberius' proposal of a new form of government had been, in effect, a decision for despotism, and the Princeps, who had offered to restore independence, had been confirmed as a reluctant monarch.

Tiberius brought to this position imperial vision and responsibility, a practical grasp and a tremendous capacity for work. The principles evident in his government prove his understanding of the national situation, and in spite of all his troubles at Rome, he was able to make his reign one of peace and prosperity. He understood, so it would seem from his policies, that the empire was in a state of transition and that the already recognizable trends would end, eventually, in the emancipation of the provinces and the loss of Italy's dominant position in the state. He saw also that an indiscriminate admission of insufficiently assimilated foreign elements might wreck Roman civilization. To preserve it, it was necessary to preserve Italian dominance in the empire until the provincials should have been sufficiently Romanized to be safely admitted to the privileges of citizenship. This view affected, directly or indirectly, all aspects of Tiberius' government.

Of the trends which were accelerating the process of foreignization, the changing character of the Roman army was the most important. Tiberius' policy in this respect was successful in solving the more immediate problems, but did not check the basic destructive trends. He made no change in Augustus'



military and fiscal system, under which it was now impossible to raise sufficient numbers in Rome and Italy alone, and not the best material either, so that it was becoming increasingly necessary to admit freeborn provincials, who received citizenship on entering the legions, and to grant citizenship to auxiliaries on retirement.<sup>1)</sup> Tiberius sought to keep this influx within safe limits, contenting himself with a defensive army and relying on a policy of non-expansion and peace on the frontiers.<sup>2)</sup> But gradually the principle of restriction had to be abandoned; the foreignization of the army took its course and in the third and fourth centuries was to become a major factor in the ruin of Roman civilization.

At the moment of Tiberius' accession, Rome was faced with a shortage of recruits as well as a shortage of money. The terms of service were too long, the conditions too harsh, and the discharge of soldiers was often delayed for years.<sup>3)</sup> A concession in this respect, made under pressure during the mutinies of 14 AD<sup>4)</sup> was soon cancelled again by Tiberius.<sup>5)</sup> Pay continued to rise, however, and the burden on the state was increased by the custom of making bequests and donations to legionaries and praetorians. Tiberius, in accordance with his usual spirit of economy, confined this to a minimum<sup>6)</sup>, but the custom helped to foster a mercenary spirit in the army, from which later emperors would be forced actually to purchase support.

Nothing could have solved the problem of the cost of the army but the imposition of a regular and permanent tax in proportion to income and property; but the idea, if it was conceived, was probably held to be impracticable. The moral uneasiness that led to the repeated proposals of sumptuary laws was not coupled with a public spirit in the modern sense, which would have channelled excessive riches into the treasury. The making available of worthwhile pay and more humane conditions of service alone could have attracted desirable Roman or thoroughly Romanized elements and could have ensured the preservation even of a volunteer army as an organic



part of the state. However, it would seem that under the circumstances facing him Tiberius did the best that was possible.

A gradual concentration of the financial administration in the hands of the emperor had begun under Augustus and continued almost automatically. The extensive and always increasing patri-mony of the emperor enabled him to help the state financially, and in undertaking this responsibility he came to have more and more influence in the management of state finances and finally almost complete control. The senate feared responsibility for the enormous expenditure for the state, and without protest gave up the management of everything but the sums paid to the treasury of the Roman people by the cities of the senatorial provinces.<sup>7)</sup> This development led to an improvement of the system of administration; it made the new régime popular with the masses while weakening further the authority of the senate. In the late third century the fiscus was to become merged completely with the res privata, making both the treasury and the empire the property of the emperor.

Parallel with the development of financial administration ran that of the apparatus required for so vast and complex a task. Since freeborn Romans could not with dignity be employed at Rome even by the First Citizen, it was an obvious solution to entrust the work to the same imperial freedmen, who managed the emperor's private property. Under Tiberius this imperial civil service was still small<sup>8)</sup>, but it was developed and systematized under Claudius<sup>9)</sup>, and the most capable imperial freedmen then became high-salaried and powerful officials, filling those positions which Tiberius, by my argument, had once intended for senators.

Tiberius inherited a treasury, which was exhausted by frontier wars, and he wished to avoid filling it by means of increased taxation. Strict economy was, therefore, at first a necessity, but the emperor maintained it throughout his reign and, in the absence of a dependable public credit system, laid by





reserves in the treasury.<sup>10)</sup> He incurred some unpopularity by curtailing the shows and games<sup>11)</sup>, but was able to help the economy in times of crisis<sup>12)</sup> and to provide generous relief when disaster struck.<sup>13)</sup> Tacitus and Suetonius criticize him for having built too little<sup>14)</sup>, but Dio Cassius gives a somewhat different picture of his building activity<sup>15)</sup>, and the evidence from inscriptions shows that he stressed the construction and repairing of roads everywhere in the empire<sup>16)</sup> and may have felt that these had precedence over Rome's need for splendid edifices. Suetonius asserts that Tiberius' frugality finally turned into greed.<sup>17)</sup> Tacitus makes the same allegation, but gives only a single example, where a prosecution of a possessor of gold and copper mines and Tiberius' subsequent appropriation of these mines are ascribed to his rapacity.<sup>18)</sup> Since the man was definitely guilty, however, it seems that the emperor may be acquitted of the charge of greed.<sup>19)</sup>

The protection of justice came to be a special concern of the emperor, not only in the senate but even in the ordinary courts where, as Tacitus tells us, his presence induced many just verdicts in spite of influential pressure and intrigue.<sup>20)</sup> The historian's statement that Tiberius, though aware of the popularity of clemency, generally preferred severity<sup>21)</sup> is not borne out by his own facts. There seems to have been only a single case, where the emperor ever insisted on severity - that of Suillius, who had been convicted of judicial corruption.<sup>22)</sup>

In provincial administration, Tiberius rather than Augustus, says Marsh, was the great reformer. His policy amounted to an open recognition that the provinces were not estates existing merely for exploitation by the rulers in Rome, but members of a commonwealth, with a right to just and good administration and aid in times of disaster. In the handling of revenues, he replaced in his later years (except for the collection of custom dues) the tax-farming companies by the direct action of the state.<sup>23)</sup> When provincial communities were stricken by calamity, he gave generous help from the treasury.<sup>24)</sup> He demanded and enforced new standards of conduct on Roman officials<sup>25)</sup> and



even employed the provincial assemblies as a means of checking abuses.<sup>26)</sup> Tiberius' procedure of leaving honest and capable governors in office for long terms<sup>27)</sup> had obvious advantages. The hope for long tenure would stimulate officials to give good service, while continuity of policy was assured and meant an added challenge and source of satisfaction to able men. But the bulk of the senators seem to have had little understanding of a policy, in which the welfare of the provinces seemed to count for more than their own; they still saw in the long-established biennial rotation the chance and traditional right of each noble to make or restore their fortunes.<sup>28)</sup>

As a result of Tiberius' wise and humane policy, the provinces prospered. Inscriptions and coins testify to their gratitude<sup>29)</sup>; and after permission had been given to Asia, Tiberius declined in at least one recorded case the erection of further temples to himself.<sup>30)</sup> The tradition of good provincial government, which he had done so much to establish, continued under his successors, and even when Rome had to endure the tyranny of a Caligula and a Nero, the rest of the empire suffered little damage.

In provincial and foreign affairs, Tiberius followed a policy of peace and diplomacy. In 21 A.D., there was a widespread but quickly suppressed revolt in Gaul, due to the continuance of the tribute and the burden of debt to Roman creditors.<sup>31)</sup> Measures taken by Tiberius in restraint of the Druids may or may not have been an additional reason.<sup>32)</sup> The emperor knew that with growing prosperity Roman civilization would take firm root and, therefore, followed a policy of stimulating trade, building new roads and repairing old ones in both southern Gaul and Spain.<sup>33)</sup> At the end of his reign, Gaul was sufficiently Romanized for a wholesale extension of citizenship by Claudius.<sup>34)</sup>

When Germanicus' punitive expeditions in Germany had served their purpose of ensuring peace along the Rhine, the emperor was firm about the recall of his nephew<sup>35)</sup>, wisely leaving Arminius





and Maroboduus to their inter-tribal quarrels. After the disintegration of Maroboduus' empire and Arminius' death, no further disturbance occurred on the German frontier throughout Tiberius' reign, except the revolt of the Frisians in 28 A.D., which had been provoked by the rapacity of a Roman official.<sup>36)</sup> The Frisian territory was lost, and Tiberius made no attempt to reconquer it.

The Raetian and Vindelician frontier remained undisturbed and was left in the hands of auxiliary troops.<sup>37)</sup> From Noricum to the Black Sea, Tiberius strengthened the existing border, for which purpose several important roads were constructed in Pannonia and Dalmatia.<sup>38)</sup> The vassal kingdom of Thrace, rather than the not yet effectively occupied province of Moesia, protected the country near the mouth of the Danube.<sup>39)</sup> An internal war between the two kings of Thrace occurred at the beginning of Tiberius' reign and revolts against a Roman regent throughout the period of 21 to 26 A.D.<sup>40)</sup> The emperor's handling of the situation in this unruly country, without recourse to wasteful warfare, while making wise provision for a safe pro-Roman future<sup>41)</sup>, is evidence of his statesmanship. After 26 A.D. there seems to have been no further trouble.

At the beginning of Tiberius' reign, the situation in the East was becoming somewhat unstable, and the emperor attended to it immediately and firmly. Archelaus, the aged and probably no longer reliable ruler of the vassal kingdom of Cappadocia, was summoned to Rome on a charge of treason and died there during the trial.<sup>42)</sup> At about the same time, the kings of Commagene and Cilicia also died; Rome annexed Cappadocia and Commagene, and Germanicus apparently made some arrangement in Cilicia, while Pontus remained a friendly vassal kingdom. The difficult task of installing a pro-Roman ruler on the Armenian throne and at the same time ensuring friendly relations with Parthia was satisfactorily solved by Germanicus.<sup>44)</sup> After this settlement, peaceful conditions prevailed in the East until 34 A.D., when the





Parthian king became aggressive and placed one of his sons on the Armenian throne. Tiberius, from Capreae, handled this problem, too, in statesmanlike fashion entirely by diplomacy and without shedding Roman blood. Frustrated in his attempts to secure dominance in Armenia and his ambition subdued, the Parthian king gave Rome no further trouble.<sup>45)</sup>

In Palestine and Egypt no serious problems occurred, and Tiberius there maintained the arrangements of Augustus.<sup>46)</sup> In Africa, however, a serious revolt broke out in 17 A.D., under Tacfarinas, and was not finally crushed until 24 A.D.<sup>47)</sup> Marsh thinks it arose from "the persistent efforts of the Roman government to extend its authority and the lands of its subjects among the semi-nomadic tribes of the interior".<sup>48)</sup> Tiberius did not interfere with the senate's administration of this province, and when the Fathers requested him to name a proconsul, he insisted that they must take part in the decision.<sup>49)</sup> Although Tacfarinas had found support in Mauretania, Tiberius changed neither the king nor the existing arrangements there.<sup>50)</sup>

Although in theory the emperor alone was charged with the business of government, the refusal to give him assistants from the ranks of the senate merely forced him to find them elsewhere. When Tiberius first took over after the death of Augustus, in the absence of a cabinet, Livia seems to have of necessity become his first helper and confidante in the arcana of high politics.<sup>51)</sup> We are told that she had much influence, and not merely behind the scenes, during Augustus' lifetime.<sup>52)</sup> She herself seems to have thought it natural that she would continue to act in this way under Tiberius with a quasi-official status - a view to which the will of Augustus would have lent some support<sup>53)</sup>; and the many honours proposed and voted her give the impression that she was, at least at first, widely taken for granted as a sort of co-regent.<sup>54)</sup> But much as Tiberius may have welcomed her advice and assistance during that first stage, in the long run he was embarrassed by her imperiousness<sup>55)</sup> and had to find other helpers.



In the administrative work he was presumably assisted by a small staff of freedmen.<sup>56)</sup> Suetonius says he asked the senate to choose him a Council of Foreign Affairs, consisting of twenty men, in addition to certain old friends and intimates, but that he killed nearly all of these<sup>57)</sup>, which may mean that some of them perished in connection with the overthrow of Seianus. Nothing is recorded about the Council's activities, and since it did not accompany the emperor to Capreae, it would seem that it had by that time ceased to function.

By that time, the place which should have been occupied by representatives of the senate had been filled by an ambitious outsider. Seianus' influence was first noticed in 14 A.D., when he was chosen to accompany Drusus to the rebellious troops in Pannonia<sup>58)</sup>, and increased steadily, thanks to his efficiency and devotion to the emperor. An able and hard-working man, he helped Tiberius in the business of government, the appreciated and trusted "Partner of his Labours"<sup>59)</sup>, but soon also his evil genius. When the emperor publicly praised Seianus and allowed the erection of statues in his honour, the servile flattery, to which the senators were so prone, was extended to the minister as well, all the more readily, since he was able to make available offices and governorships.<sup>60)</sup> With the concentration of his Praetorian Guards in one camp, Seianus' position became powerful.<sup>61)</sup> It was almost inevitable that, at some stage, he should look for and perceive a possibility of manoeuvring himself on to the throne instead of continuing to serve it. His criminal intrigues were then to plunge Rome into a long period of political unrest, which continued even after Seianus himself had met his doom. The reaction of the Romans was to blame Tiberius, who was held responsible for his minister's doings while he was alive and <sup>who</sup> after Seianus' overthrow was forced to deal firmly with a political situation too agitated to calm down. But the senate, which had refused to supply worthy helpers from its own ranks, actually had only to thank itself.



## Tiberius and the senate

One of Tiberius' first acts was the transferring of the elections from the assembly to the senate.<sup>1)</sup> This was a change in form rather than in principle, for the emperor, through his endorsement of candidates, could control the elections under both systems. The new arrangement, therefore, took no real power away from the assembly, while on the other hand it relieved the candidates of the necessity of undignified canvassing and bribery of the mob.

Tiberius' attitude towards the senate during the first nine years of his reign was in fact a sustained effort to make that body a serious partner in the government. He insisted on regular attendance<sup>2)</sup>, promoted free discussion, and took it well, when the senate adopted proposals against his expressed opinion.<sup>3)</sup> His modest behaviour and politeness towards the senate are attested by both Suetonius and Dio, and the latter makes much of the emperor's accessibility.<sup>4)</sup> He checked the Fathers' lapses into subserviency and emphasized repeatedly that he wished to be considered human and simply the first servant of the state.<sup>5)</sup>

The senate administered independently its own provinces and treasury<sup>6)</sup>, and senatorial officials were appointed to regular and special offices.<sup>7)</sup> Tiberius consulted the senate on matters of foreign policy as well as financial and economic questions. The existing advisory and interpretative legal powers of the senate were extended into a definite jurisdiction over cases of treason as well as criminal cases against senators and to some extent also over equestrians<sup>8)</sup>; thus it became the chief judicial body and was incidentally given a new means of control over its own provinces. But most significant, it seems to me, is Tiberius' discussion of military matters in the senate<sup>9)</sup>, which indicates that he was deliberately trying to re-acustom the Fathers to share in this responsibility.





Tiberius' financial support of impoverished but deserving senators<sup>10)</sup> seems to indicate that he wished to see this class preserved as a source of superior material for the great offices of the state. Everything indeed points to the emperor's intention of trying to achieve by his policies what he had not achieved by discussion; yet he failed in this as well. Apart from the attitude of the senate, Tiberius' own approach to the problem seems to have been the chief reason for the failure, both in a purely technical and in a deeper sense.

Tiberius seems to have proposed a type of Republic hitherto unknown in Rome, one which meant the same challenge of independent policy-making and the same chance to gain distinction, but which, unlike the old Republic, ensured by a special constitutional safeguard that these opportunities could not be used in ways harmful to the state. To confine the operation of the ultimate authority to a minimum, however, and thus allow an unclouded enjoyment of the new independence, one thing would be necessary - to lay aside personal and class egoism and learn to govern the empire solely in the interests of the common weal. In the years to come, though, Tiberius was to discover that in this respect the senate was unwilling, or else unable, to change its point of view. Very soon it must have become evident that, even if he succeeded in getting his proposal accepted, the nobles would still be guided by their city-state and class privilege concepts, and their lack of imperial responsibility would call for constant interference by the supreme guardian. Tiberius must have seen that, if the reform was to be effective, it was necessary to begin by reforming the thinking; otherwise the proposed change in constitutional forms alone would make no difference and would still leave the senate dependent on the guidance of the emperor.

If Tiberius was surprised to find such a difference in attitude between himself and the bulk of the senators (whom from background and experience he might have expected to possess a political outlook much like his own), he may still have thought that the example of his own decisions and policies would suffice.



In spite of his love for learning, he apparently was a man given to action rather than to explanation of the principles which guided his action; he was a statesman, but unfortunately no politician. When he found that the example of his actions and policies failed to change the attitude of the senators, he was temperamentally incapable of doing anything about it. The nobles' mentality being what it was, one might doubt whether even a more eloquent leader and adroit propagandist could have changed it quickly; but Tiberius certainly was not the man. If he failed to communicate to the senate the exact constitutional arrangement he was proposing, this omission was augmented by the vastly more serious failure to train the senate's vision for the imperial perspective, which was an indispensable requirement if his new constitution was ever to be introduced.

We must assume that the original misunderstanding was never cleared up; if the emperor did make further attempts to explain himself, it was probably done in much the same way as in the inauguration debate and with much the same negative results. After that first meeting, when he must have realized that his speeches to an unprepared audience would neither establish nor promote fruitful co-operation, he ought to have left nothing to chance. He ought to have taken care that the principles which guided his imperial policy were thoroughly understood by at least a few key men. He should have gathered a loyal following around a core of reliable friends - and such apparently he did not lack - as a means of spreading his ideas and making sure of public support. Initiation of administrative reforms alone could not win over anyone so long as his motives and overall policy were not grasped and his sincerity doubted. But Tiberius failed to advertise his ideas, because his reserved personality apparently was coupled with an utter scorn of the techniques of the political craft. Here, I think, lies the key to the tragedy of Tiberius. Not arrogance, contempt, or tactlessness isolated him from the senate, but the complete absence of a political instinct and, it would seem, the neglect of any training in the ways and means of public



relations. I think that the constantly cited harsh manner of the emperor alone could not possibly have had such a detrimental effect upon his relationship with the senate and that this was the case only because it was accompanied by an unfortunate lack of political "know-how" and an inability, perhaps, formally to expound his principles. He probably was not even conscious of a system of principles in his political thinking. Whether he never became aware of his deficiency or whether he simply found no remedy, I think, Tiberius' inability to see the need for propaganda and his inability to organize propaganda are the ultimate reasons for nearly all that went wrong in his government.

Had he managed to win the senate's co-operation, there would have been no Seianus. The throne would have become non-partisan, politics would have remained in the senate, and candidates for the imperial office would not have become involved in party strife. That office itself, removed from the political arena, most probably would not have been coveted ardently enough by possible pretenders <sup>for them</sup> to take the risks of a conspiracy. Finally, a senate learning wise government, Rome and Italy at large learning public spirit, city-state mentality giving way to a consciousness of the empire as an organic whole might even have curbed the destructive economic and social trends before they had progressed too far: this is the "might-have-been" of the turning point that was the reign of Tiberius.

Tiberius' failure meant more than a great project abandoned; it meant the disastrous collapse of government in his own reign and the final doom of Roman civilization. The army, the treasury, the beginnings of a civil service, all under the control of the emperor, and the moral and intellectual incapability of the senate of challenging that control, must needs lead to autocracy. Tiberius' proposal was the one means to stop that development, his own reign probably the last point in Roman history where a reform could still have succeeded. He realized that the Romans must have freedom to exercise their strength in order to preserve





it, but selfishness had blinded the nation, and no amount of freedom and strength would make it go in the right direction unless it could first be made to see. Tiberius conceived of his position as that of a guide and guardian, ready to withdraw when he was not needed, but it is difficult to see how far he realized that he must also be a teacher. His failure neutralized permanently the nation's latent creative forces, which he had meant to re-awaken, and the task, which would not have been beyond these forces, could not be solved later by benevolent autocracy and paternalism.

A number of episodes, which Tacitus has recorded, illustrate the difference in outlook, which was to prove an insurmountable barrier between Princeps and senate. The views of the senate appear selfish and somewhat backward; there is a lack of initiative or rather a lack of purpose towards which to apply what initiative they might have. The anecdotes make it evident that the development towards despotism was due, not to the political preponderance of the Princeps, but to the senate's inability to raise itself to his superior approach to the government of the empire.

In 15 A.D., a flood of the Tiber caused much loss of life and buildings. Asinius Gallus proposed consultation of the Sibylline Books. Tiberius proposed the study of measures to control the water level and appointed two eminent senators to carry it out. The senate heard their proposals and then the pleas of various country towns, whose interests would be affected; and as a result, a motion was carried that nothing should be changed.<sup>11)</sup>

In 22 A.D., Greek cities were affording criminals over-lavish rights of sanctuary, so that law and order were endangered. They were requested, therefore, to submit their respective claims and charters in Rome, to be considered by the senate. "It was a splendid sight, that day," says Tacitus, to see the senate investigating privileges conferred by its ancestors, treaties with



allies, edicts of kings who had reigned before Rome was a power, even divine cults; and it was free, as of old, to confirm or amend." But the senators no longer acted with the competence of their ancestors; wearied by the extensive material and local rivalries, they instructed the consuls to investigate the charters and report back. That such sanctuaries had some justification under the harsh laws of primitive societies, but that under enlightened Roman rule it might be better to make the laws humane and then assert them without exception, seems to have been too radical a reflection even to be suggested. Some of the sanctuaries were confirmed and the rest abolished.<sup>12)</sup>

The year before, the Fathers had even referred to the emperor the decision of choosing a proconsul for a senatorial province, and Tiberius had reproached them for referring to him what was clearly their own business, in terms indicating that this happened all too frequently.<sup>13)</sup> The instances, where decisions were made contrary to the emperor's wishes, seem to have been of very limited importance, and a shrinking from initiative and responsibility seems to have marked the general attitude of the senate. I think that this was due to a growing awareness on the part of the senators of an essential, but to them incomprehensible, difference between Tiberius' views and their own, rather than intimidation by the emperor's harsh manner, which is generally supposed to have cancelled completely the effects of all his urging toward independence.

When Tiberius presented an impoverished but deserving senator with a million sesterces, other applications followed, and the emperor laid down the rule that applicants must demonstrate acceptable causes for their poverty before the senate.<sup>14)</sup> Marsh thinks that Tiberius may have asked for a greater degree of publicity than was necessary and sees especially in the Hortalus episode a characteristic example of Tiberius' temperamental inability to handle the senate.<sup>15)</sup> Hortalus, an impoverished young nobleman



and grandson of the orator Quintus Hortensius, had been persuaded by a grant of a million sesterces from Augustus to marry and have children. Finding himself in straitened circumstances again, Hortalus chose to surprise the emperor by an untimely request for financial assistance during a senate meeting, having first posted his four sons at the door of the hall for greater effect. According to Tacitus, the senate looked favourably upon this request, but Tiberius replied by pointing out its impropriety: "When our ancestors authorized senators to digress sometimes from their subject matter and raise matters of public importance when it was their turn to speak, this was not to enable us to promote our private interests and personal finances... A member interrupts a session - convened for other purposes - by rising and embarrassing the senate with a list of his children and their ages! I am involved, and an attack is made on the treasury. But if we empty it by favouritism, we shall need criminal methods to fill it", while "repeated grants would mean an end of all effort and all enterprise, because their incentives, fear and ambition, would be gone... securi omnes aliena subsidia expectabunt, sibi ignavi, nobis graves." But having made his point, the emperor - aware, says Tacitus, that his speech had made an unfavourable impression - announced that he would, if the senate approved, bestow two hundred thousand sesterces on each of Hortalus' sons.

"The emperor's bitter speech", says Marsh, "must have gone far to deprive his reluctant concession of any value in conciliating the senate. After such a scene it is easy to believe that the conscript fathers may have disliked and feared Tiberius in spite of his outward deference to them; Augustus would have known how to reject the petition of Hortensius without incurring their ill-will, but Tiberius probably provoked their resentment even in the act of yielding to their wishes."<sup>16</sup>) In my opinion, the bluntness of Tiberius' sensible speech only accentuates a basic incompatibility of views. Tiberius was thinking in terms of responsibility for a vast commonwealth, the senators, along with





Hortensius, in terms of their own class, the welfare of which came before everything else. We do not hear of Hortensius Hortalus again; his ancestry seems to have been his only asset; the principle was at stake whether or not to give public support to a noble family for no other reason than its nobility. Not conciliation after the manner of Augustus was needed here - nor, I am sure, intended by Tiberius - but instruction. The nobles must be taught why such requests were not justified, and this was Tiberius' way of telling them. He knew of no other and throughout his reign discovered none.

A part of the senate was strongly in favour of sumptuary laws. In 16 A.D., a decree was passed forbidding the use of solid gold for dishes and the wearing of silk clothing by men. Further measures were proposed, but Tiberius, seeing the futility, refused to go along.<sup>17)</sup> In 22 A.D., the matter came up again, when the aediles complained that food prices were increasing daily and <sup>that</sup> inordinately large sums were being spent on gluttonous eating.<sup>18)</sup> That the question was raised and immediately, without discussion, referred to the emperor, was characteristic. The rich, who dined on nightingales' tongues from gold dishes, vaguely aware that something was wrong with a life that exhausted itself in self-indulgence, and with wealth exhausted in debauchery, were yet incapable of redeeming themselves. If material prosperity and physical well-being were not ends in themselves, none of the prevalent philosophies was able to explain satisfactorily just what the ends of an individual life might be and, therefore, could suggest no new ideas as to what a man ought to do with his resources. Neither did the contrasts between their own wealth on the one hand, and the poverty and slavery which surrounded them, on the other, stir up any reflection about the basic rights of all human beings; in fact, such thoughts could be quickly set at rest by the Stoic doctrine that true freedom and happiness are quite independent of outward circumstances. But only the recognition that all men were entitled to a modicum of property and



welfare could have started a new kind of thinking about just distribution of wealth and about worthy purposes, which an empire at peace might attempt to achieve, and how in that attempt the individual might win satisfaction for the soul beside the honour of office. Humanity might, and often did, reign in the individual household; it was not applied to society at large, to develop into public spirit. The demand for sumptuary laws no doubt sprang from a vague consciousness of the emptiness of life in that debauched society, but the matter remained in the very first stage of uneasiness and was, without discussion but probably with a sigh of relief, referred to the emperor. Let the stern and frugal Tiberius tackle the troublesome question, and they would be sinning against his law rather than their own conscience.

Tiberius did not mince his words, and the sanity of his reply ought to have made the senators deeply ashamed. He says that the evil is far-developed; had he been consulted earlier, he would have advised against its discussion. The aediles have done their duty by bringing the matter up, but what is the emperor to say and do about it? What standards is he to set? He points out various excesses of extravagance - if they were penalized by law, their present critics themselves would cry that it was a national disaster, a death-blow to distinction, the conversion of everyone into a potential criminal. The Romans have lost their ancient self-restraint, because dominance over other peoples brought at once temptations and the money to gratify them, and because even from their civil wars they concluded that immediate spending was better than saving for an uncertain future. But now it is not up to the emperor to curb the evil of extravagance by law - intra animum medendum est; nos pudor, pauperes necessitas, divites satias in melius mutet. And to make it quite clear how well he has understood: If any officials want to denounce misbehaviour, take the credit for it, and then leave the emperor the enmities they have created, "credite, patres conscripti, me quoque non



esse offensionum avidum; quas cum graves et plerumque iniquas pro re publica suscipiam, inanes et inritas neque mihi aut vobis usui futuras iure deprecor."

But the most important feature of the letter seems to me that Tiberius is trying to show the senate that they are spending time and energy on a matter which ought not to be subject to legislation and government action at all, and to make them see their paltry, self-created problems in the proper proportion to those with which the emperor is left to deal all by himself - Italy's dependence on external resources, Rome's subsistence continually at the mercy of sea and storm. The neglect of this care would mean national ruin.<sup>19)</sup> This care - he could not have made it clearer - is one that ought to be the object of the exertions of those who would be leaders of the nation. But we do not hear that the senate felt moved to offer assistance in this vital task.

How the relationship between Tiberius and his people at last deteriorated to a state beyond mending is evident from the episode in connection with his refusal of a temple to himself in Spain.<sup>20)</sup> He has allowed the erection of such a temple in Asia, Tiberius explains, following the example of Augustus, and the more readily, since the senate was to be worshipped together with himself. But to have his statue worshipped among the gods in every province would be presumptuous and arrogant. He emphasizes that he is human, performing human tasks, and content to occupy the first place among men. That is what he wants later generations to remember, who will do ample honour to his memory if they judge him worthy of his ancestors, careful of his subjects' interests, steadfast in danger, and fearless of animosities incurred in the public service. Haec mihi in animis vestris templa, hae pulcherrimae effigies et mansurae... So he prays that heaven may grant him a peaceful mind and an understanding of what is due to gods and men, and that his fellow citizens, after his death, may remember his actions and his name with praise and kindly thoughts.





If Tiberius' modesty and noble conception of his office made little impression, the hint at his distress at having to incur animosities in the public service was completely lost on the senate. Many people, says Tacitus, interpreted his attitude as diffidence and some as degeneracy. contemptu famae contemni virtutes.<sup>21)</sup> The comment indicates an utter lack of judgment as to just what the virtues of a ruler ought to be - one wonders whether Tiberius' fine enumeration of his aims did not qualify - and just what kind of fame a ruler ought to aspire to: the emperor's critics evidently did think the temple of stone more desirable after all, as compared with the one in people's hearts for which Tiberius was praying. Clearly, from such a state of mind neither understanding nor willingness to collaborate could be hoped for, and nothing that Tiberius might do or say now would bridge the widening gulf.

Marsh comes to the conclusion that Tiberius' efforts to make the senate a serious partner in the government failed "not because he gave that body too subordinate a rôle, but because the part he wished the conscript fathers to play demanded a degree of independence of which they were incapable".<sup>22)</sup> I think what they were not capable of was the ability to think in terms imperial rather than Roman, in terms democratic and humanitarian rather than aristocratic. What good was an independent senate, if it used its independence only to continue the traditional aristocratic policy, which considered good administration of the provinces at best a means of preserving them well as estates of Rome, and which saw a more urgent need for gladiator and wild animal shows at the capital than for provincial road building and relief of cities stricken by earthquake? Tiberius' policies did not stimulate them to new ways of thinking; irritated and uncomprehending, they looked for explanations in faults of his character and thought it safest to substitute sycophancy for initiative.



The instances of servility are interminable: the grovelling and weeping - sometimes, if we may believe Tacitus, not even an expression but a disguise of feelings<sup>23)</sup>; the motions of such fulsome flattery that the emperor was repeatedly forced to check and refuse them<sup>24)</sup>; and, most shocking, the senate's incredible readiness to condemn.<sup>25)</sup> Furneaux says that the Fathers naturally did not want to appear to be taking lightly any insults to the emperor<sup>26)</sup>; but it seems they had nothing to fear if they appeared to be taking these "insults" sensibly - as Tiberius did.<sup>27)</sup> Tacitus says that this was a tainted, meanly obsequious age, when the greatest figures had to protect their positions by subserviency<sup>28)</sup>; but since Tiberius is elsewhere said to have checked lapses into servility and allowed freedom of speech and encouraged independent decisions, the statement that people "had" to protect their positions by subserviency is hardly convincing.

During his twelve years in Rome, the emperor was unable to make his relationship with the senate even one of mutual trust; hampered by a fundamental difference in political views and a permanent misunderstanding about Tiberius' constitutional intentions, it seems to have resulted in the emperor's steadily progressing psychological separation from his people, which saw its consummation in the retirement to Capreae.



## The struggle for the succession

The question of succession became immediately connected with the quarrel among the two parties already existing at the time of Tiberius' accession. These parties represented the two social groups from whose ranks the magistracies and the senate were filled. The higher aristocracy, convinced of their superior fitness to rule, were still trying to preserve that domain for themselves, while the lower nobility and novi homines, on the other hand, were questioning this exclusiveness with some justification and demanding opportunities for all able men, regardless of birth. Tiberius' policies in the appointment of magistrates, according to Marsh, definitely favoured the old nobility, his own class<sup>1)</sup>, but careers were open also to able new men.<sup>2)</sup> Germanicus, the heir presumptive, was the champion of an aggressive frontier policy, in which the lesser nobles and new men saw a way to promotion and which, therefore, automatically attracted to him a strong following. This caused concern in the camp of the higher nobility with their jealous exclusiveness; and, counting on the greater affection, which they were convinced Tiberius must feel for his own son, and the normal ambition, which Drusus must have in spite of his seeming indifference, they began to consider that young prince as an alternative candidate for the throne, who might be set up against Germanicus. Although the question of succession seemed settled, as far as the men of the imperial house were concerned, the two parties might well see room for speculation considering the ambition and discord among the imperial women.

Upon Germanicus' return from Germany, Tiberius may have thought it the wisest course to have Germanicus' followers look to himself for advancement rather than to Germanicus, for he favoured them markedly and, as Marsh suggests, may even, by making their advancement so obviously due to the influence of Germanicus, have bound the lesser nobles to that prince still





more strongly, thus actually widening the gulf between the two factions. After Germanicus' death the emperor reverted to his original policy.<sup>3)</sup>

The unpopularity of Tiberius, resulting from his failure to secure the co-operation of the senate, was greatly increased by the death of Germanicus; and from strong unpopularity to promotion of a more popular successor it was only a step. The event had naturally strengthened the Claudian faction, and this in turn irritated the Julians, who began to rally their supporters and soon, egged on by the agents of the evil Seianus, to conspire. Then party strife, succession problem, and an unfortunate legal apparatus, all combined in one great calamity, as the result of which a great and good emperor would go down into history as a cruel despot and the last phase of his reign as a Reign of Terror. For Tacitus, in this development, has stressed the evils of the treason law and of delation as the instruments of a tyrant, while minimizing and suppressing the guilt of the conspirators, and his motives for this treatment are easily explained from his own harrowing experience under Domitian. But the facts beneath his rhetoric tell a different story.

The treason law had been in existence since Republican times and had always applied to slander of the magistrates, if the purpose was seditious. Now that the emperor was the highest magistrate it came to apply chiefly to him; but Augustus, in the last years of his reign had extended it to cover also defamatory libel of the aristocracy.<sup>4)</sup> It was probably with reference to this extension that soon after Tiberius' accession, the praetor asked him whether charges of treason should be allowed to come to trial, and the emperor, here as always following the precedent of his predecessor, replied that the law must be enforced.<sup>5)</sup>

Tacitus goes on to say that Tiberius at this time had been annoyed by some slanderous verses<sup>6)</sup>, though there is in effect no connection between his alleged anger and his direction to enforce the



treason law. On the contrary, he explicitly refused to use the law as a personal protection, and for years dismissed all charges of libel directed against himself.<sup>7)</sup>

According to the computation of Marsh, there may not have been a single case during the whole reign, where mere slander of the emperor was punished, for in the case of Votienus Montanus the charge probably was seditious libel rather than simple slander.<sup>8)</sup> Frivolous charges were no longer brought after the first few attempts after Tiberius' accession, presumably because the delators saw the futility. A few cases of slander, which were treated with severity during the last years of the reign<sup>9)</sup>, were probably with good reason considered dangerous. Computations by modern commentators of the maiestas cases prove that the law was never used as an instrument to gratify the cruelty of a tyrannical Tiberius; on the contrary. Even after the Seianus upheaval, in Marsh's words, "the number of prosecutions is much smaller than might have been expected after what had passed, and the proceedings seem to show that a real attempt was made to secure justice; in short the whole picture of the Tiberian terror is a product of imagination and rhetoric quite unsupported by the evidence."<sup>10)</sup>

The system of having delators instead of a public prosecutor was very bad, because of the vile spirit it fostered in these informers and because of the sinister atmosphere, which their presence gave society, but so long as only well-founded charges were accepted and false accusations punished, its most evil aspects were curbed, and in this respect Tiberius obviously did what he could.<sup>11)</sup> In the absence of a different system, the emperor was right, when he declared that rewards for the delators were necessary to secure the enforcement of the laws.<sup>12)</sup> If he is to be blamed for not finding a different system, says Marsh, "a much more severe censure must be passed on (the five good emperors, who) lived after the worst evils of delation had been clearly revealed, yet, like Tiberius, they retained it and sought merely to repress its abuses."<sup>13)</sup> It would seem that, under Tiberius, such





care was taken in the application of the system that, the situation in Rome being what it was, the number of convictions probably was no larger than it would have been under a public prosecutor. Not the continuous employment of delators and the maiestas law, but the rank growth of conspiracies, constituted the evil, and these were possible only because the succession problem, with which Tiberius had been saddled by his predecessor, left hope and room for them.

Tiberius apparently had been relieved of the necessity of dealing with the first problem (and the first casualty) in the struggle for the succession, Agrippa Postumus. But he lost no time in attending to the next; immediately after his inauguration, he requested proconsular imperium for Germanicus and dispatched a mission to confer it.<sup>14)</sup> In connection with the prince's recall, he took special pains not to offend him.<sup>15)</sup> Although, contrary to Tacitus' assertions<sup>16)</sup>, no coldness on the part of Tiberius and Livia towards Germanicus is apparent, there was some reason for concern, since the ambitious Agrippina, eager friends, and the prince's popularity with the troops, all combined, might eventually prove stronger than his probably loyal mind. Upon his return, a suitable task to employ him offered itself in the mission to the East; in accordance with precedent, it was an honour and good experience for the heir to the throne and, in view of Germanicus' by no means satisfactory earlier conduct as a leader of men, obviously valuable training. However, it was also a unique opportunity for the prince to seize the East and make an attempt on the throne, if the combination of his eager environment and favourable circumstances should induce him to change his mind.

Tiberius felt it necessary to check Germanicus not merely by sending along the mentor customary on such occasions, but by appointing a new governor of Syria, to act as a reliable counterbalance in ensuring the loyalty of the troops and <sup>to</sup> prevent the young prince from involving the empire in a Parthian war.<sup>17)</sup> While the wisdom of the move as such is not questioned, Tiberius





has been much blamed for his selection of so unsuitable a man for so delicate a task. He overlooked the fact, says Marsh, "that (Piso's) pride and his violent temper, combined with his unfriendly attitude towards Germanicus might lead him to go further than intended".<sup>18)</sup> I think, in fairness to Tiberius another possibility ought to be allowed for, namely, that the degree of Piso's pride and violent temper so far had not appeared to be such as to make it seem possible that he would overdo.

Germanicus carried out his mission satisfactorily, but he and Piso quarrelled severely, and when the prince died of some illness, both he himself on his sickbed and Agrippina alleged that Piso and his wife Plancina had caused his death. Suspicion was also cast on Tiberius, who, some said, had instructed Piso (and Livia, for good measure, had given Plancina instructions regarding Agrippina) to remove Germanicus.<sup>19)</sup> From the events of Piso's trial conclusions have been drawn as to what did happen. On the charge of poisoning the prosecution broke down. (Even Tacitus does not believe in the murder, although he goes on to write as if he did.) That the charge of corrupting the troops was not pressed, has been interpreted as meaning that Piso had Tiberius' approval in making himself popular with the soldiers. The emperor was, however, implacable because Piso had made war on the province, trying to resume his command after Germanicus' death, and this was the one act which obviously was not covered by his instructions, written or verbal.<sup>20)</sup> He anticipated condemnation by suicide. Tiberius intervened in favour of Plancina, pleading in great embarrassment the wishes of his mother; and Tacitus states that his action met with secret disapproval. But since the charge of poisoning could not be sustained, and the matter of corrupting the troops had been dropped, Plancina was hardly affected by the remaining charge, and Tiberius was technically correct. His sole error consisted in having appointed a man unsuitable for his task, but it is easy to say after the event that he ought to have realized this. Every one of the other actors in that drama, Piso, Germanicus, Plancina,



and last not least Agrippina, all have a larger share of responsibility than Tiberius in the fact that the tragedy assumed such proportions.

I think, Tiberius saw it at once as the blow it was to his own position and to his relationship with his people, and that this was the chief reason for his absence at the funeral ceremonies, a fact for which nobody yet seems to have found an excuse. Marsh gives it as an example of Tiberius' failure to pay attention to the effect which his conduct had on the people.<sup>21)</sup> I think he simply could not bring himself to join in the mourning of people, who more or less openly ascribed to him some degree of guilt in this death. For all his reserve, Tiberius was a sensitive man. When he had read the funeral eulogy for Augustus, his voice had failed him, and he had been unable, in public, to conceal his emotion.<sup>22)</sup> At Germanicus' death, when bitter self-reproaches would add to his distress, he may have feared to be unable to control a similar breakdown - which would have been interpreted only too readily as a sign of guilt in the destruction of Germanicus. For similar reasons, I think, Tiberius avoided meeting Agrippina with the urn. Tacitus reports that he had been very annoyed at her placing herself unduly in the foreground with the army in Germany.<sup>23)</sup> This was worse. If Tacitus' description of her progress through Italy and the funeral procession to the Mausoleum, with the talk of the mourners, is authentic, we need to seek no further explanation for Tiberius' staying away. This was a political demonstration, among which his appearance would have been certain to lead to unpleasant if not dangerous incidents.<sup>24)</sup>

Since the children of Germanicus were too young, Drusus now became the heir apparent, although probably, in accordance with precedent and Augustus' wishes, as locum tenens for Nero and Drusus. Drusus' friendliness towards his nephews was taken as an indication that he accepted the situation.<sup>25)</sup> Agrippina found herself, for the moment, somewhat removed to the background, and she may have found that hard to accept. Moreover, she may





have had doubts as to whether the arrangement would stand; if Drusus was prepared to set aside the claims of his own children, Livilla may well have felt differently. Marsh thinks that this was almost certainly the case and that a contributing factor existed in Livilla's probably unhappy marriage; "for her children's sake and perhaps to avenge her own wrongs, Livilla was prepared to dare all things."<sup>26)</sup> The rivalry of the two women was exploited by Seianus for schemes of his own. The relationship between Drusus and the minister was such that the latter could look forward only with the greatest misgivings to the day, when Tiberius' son would mount the throne.<sup>27)</sup> His career, he had reason to fear, would then be at an end. If, on the other hand, Drusus should die while Nero was still too young and insufficiently prepared to become emperor, a new emperor-regent would be required, and the trusted minister himself would be an obvious candidate. It is possible and seems to fit into the whole pattern of events that Seianus, when he had corrupted Livilla<sup>28)</sup>, also induced her to murder her husband, but it is not proven.<sup>29)</sup> Whatever the cause of Drusus' death, it brought no immediate advancement to Seianus; the emperor was still considering another possibility.

Soon after Drusus' death, Tiberius presented Germanicus' sons Nero and Drusus to the senate and commended them to the Fathers' charge and guidance: "Augusti pronepotes, clarissimis maioribus genitos, suscipite, regite, vestram meamque vicem explete."<sup>30)</sup> Tacitus reports that Tiberius' words were received very well; then he adds a strange sentence: ac si modum orationi posuisset, misericordia sui gloriaque animos audientium impleverat: ad vana et totiens inrisa revolutus, de reddenda re publica utque consules seu quis alius regimen susciperent, vero quoque et honesto fidem dempsit.<sup>31)</sup> Tacitus has not mentioned any references to res publica reddenda since the accession debate; the word totiens makes it seem possible that he had found such references in his sources but had not included them in his own history. I think it likely further, that, what Tacitus has





compressed into one brief contemptuous sentence, in reality constituted a formal proposal concerning a change in the forms of government. But did Tiberius really suggest a restoration of the old Republic at the same time when, through the formal designation of the two princes implied in his gesture, he was actually taking a step towards the consolidation of the Principate? My view is that the proposal probably ran much along the same lines as the one at the accession meeting and that Tacitus - knowingly or unknowingly - has misrepresented the matter again.

If Tiberius was suggesting a restoration of the Republic in its ancient meaning, with the consuls as the supreme authority, then his commendation of the young men to the senate was not only insincere but positively embarrassing to all concerned; and there was no need for such a gesture. Besides the old reasons for not restoring the old Republic were still valid. Obviously, placing the young princes thus formally under the guardianship of the highest public body in the state could only mean that they were to be marked out and groomed for a high public office; and the explicit reference to their august ancestor could not fail to be understood as an indication that this office was the throne. Besides, this was exactly what, from the original succession arrangements and the now existing situation, everybody had taken for granted in the first place. Since the house of Germanicus had many followers, and the followers of Drusus were neutralized for the moment in view of the great youth of the latter's sons, no opposition was to be expected. Nor did any occur; on the contrary - magno ea fletu et mox precationibus faustis audita. What more could Tiberius wish, if his gesture was intended to consolidate the Principate in its present form? When the princes thus formally marked for the imperial office were greeted with such profound emotion (no dissimulation on the part of the senate here!), why should the emperor choose this happy moment, which might usher in a permanent dyarchical harmony, to suggest a restoration of the old Republic, which



would make a monarch superfluous, - a completely unnecessary provocation to the young emperors designate and their ambitious mother? The incongruence between the gesture implying perpetuation and consolidation of the Principate and the explicit mention of some kind of "Republican" reform would be puzzling, if the proceedings of the inauguration meeting did not furnish a clue. I think, it is a reasonable assumption that Tiberius was still distinguishing between imperial supreme guardianship and senatorial administration of government and was hoping that, on this occasion, he would be so understood.

There is, in Tiberius' second proposal, a new note, if Tacitus has used the emperor's original words. He is not referring generally to inlustres viri, who might be charged with the business of government, but now suggests the consuls in the first place, with the addition "or somebody else". The consuls were in office for a year or less, and rotating them at that speed as "heads of departments" could not appear an ideal solution to Tiberius, who preferred to leave capable men in office for long terms. Still, this was a question of secondary importance and could perhaps be settled by a compromise. Of greater significance was another fact. In the original proposal, eminent men, though presumably taken exclusively from the senate, once they were installed as ministers, to the Princes' and their own satisfaction, might easily become detached from the senate and in the end responsible only to the emperor. If, however, the ministers were also the consuls, it would become inevitable for them to be available for questioning in the senate. Tiberius' suggestion meant as much "responsible government" as the Rome of that day was capable of undertaking. Such an arrangement would indeed come very close to that under the Republic, and Tiberius, if he did use the words res publica reddenda, probably meant them in this sense.

Marsh takes "the intimation of Tiberius that the consuls or someone else might take charge to mean that he would leave the choice of an emperor-regent to the senate".<sup>32)</sup> If the consuls were to "take charge" of all the business of government,



including that which was now exclusively the province of the emperor - in particular the army - that would indeed amount to bringing back the old Republic, perhaps permanently (since the senate was not bound by a promise to Augustus), or else voluntarily reverting to the dyarchy when the next young emperor came of age. It might be argued that the favourable reception given Nero and Drusus convinced Tiberius that the senate would follow the latter course of its own accord. But would he have called the temporary taking charge of the consuls "restoration of the Republic"? Neither can he have been blind to the fact that this course would once again expose the state to the old risks, and I doubt that he was prepared to trust to the good sense of the senate and take this chance. There were also the directions of Augustus with regard to the Julian dynasty, which Tiberius was obviously still following. Would he allow the senate a degree of discretion which, in spite of its present favourable disposition, would technically and practically enable it to choose a Princeps from some other gens or to terminate the office as such?

All these difficulties are resolved, if we assume that Tiberius was still making a distinction between throne and government and was repeating his proposal of nine years ago. Republican government would be restored, not as a fiction, but in truth; the more the wisdom of the senate should warrant it, the more complete its independence would be. The safety of the empire would be ensured by the imperial supreme guardian. Augustus' dynastic wishes would be fulfilled by the accession to the throne of his great-grandsons. The behaviour of the emperor, finally, would also be satisfactorily explained, on this occasion as during the accession debate, not as a hypocritical farce or evidence of timidity and weariness, but as a sincere and statesmanlike, though unsuccessful proposal of constitutional reform.

Thus on two important occasions, Tiberius had attempted to propose a constitutional arrangement, which would limit the rôle





of the monarch to the one function which he alone could and must exercise, while turning over the business of government to that part of the people, who had always made it their business. If Tacitus' possibly inadvertent use of the word totiens is not entirely without meaning, he had discussed the matter also, more than once, elsewhere during the nine year period. During this period, then, the Republic might have been restored, if only the Republicans had been ready. However, on this occasion, as nine years before, among the great weeping and the prayers, the Fathers missed their opportunity again, presumably misunderstanding or disbelieving the emperor and once again making it impossible for him to continue with his proposal.

I can see only one possible reason why these repeated attempts never even led to a proper discussion of the suggestion. I think that Tiberius, who was forever stressing his modestia and wished to be considered only the First Senator and the First Magistrate, was simply never able to formulate clearly in the senate, so as to be understood and, more important, believed, the novel (and crucial) point that in his proposed Republic he, and he alone, would be in the topmost position - above the Republican government. I think that he may have continued to hope that this would eventually dawn on the senators, who were sufficiently familiar with the various aspects of the problem to hit on such a solution themselves. But the idea of a man holding the highest position in the state and not using it to exercise his power appears to have been incomprehensible to them. The obvious conclusion was that Tiberius must be hypocritical.



Seianus

When Tacitus takes the ninth year of Tiberius' reign as the occasion for a review of all branches of government<sup>1)</sup>, he has nothing but praise, except for the administration of the treason law, where we know Tacitus was not an unbiased judge. He speaks of a subsequent deterioration of the government, but it is the political climate, not the administration, that deteriorated. It seems to have begun with a sudden aggressiveness on the part of the Julians, which is hard to explain except by the machinations and clever provocation of Seianus. While they were bringing Nero and Drusus unduly to the foreground<sup>2)</sup>, as if to hasten the succession and force Tiberius' hand, a number of treason cases during the next two years brought to light serious plots; these were stopped by Tiberius and Seianus with firmness, but hardly, as the Julians asserted, with undue severity. Marsh thinks that, although this is not evident from Tacitus<sup>3)</sup>, the various cases may well have been connected and may have pointed to Agrippina and Nero as "the figure heads, at least, of a widespread movement of sedition".<sup>4)</sup> There were also a few cases of slander of the emperor which, considering the previous tolerance, were treated with severity and, therefore, must have been felt to be dangerous.<sup>5)</sup>

In connection with the case against Cornutus, a motion was made in the senate that, if the accused committed suicide, the informer should receive no reward. It is not surprising that Tiberius, in troubled times like these, should decline to deprive himself by such a measure of the only guardians of the law he had.<sup>6)</sup>

Whether or not Seianus had ever considered accepting the regentship for Nero, he must soon have come to the conclusion that a satisfactory relationship with that prince would be impossible, since he was completely under the influence of his mother, and the imperious and violent Agrippina would be intolerable. Seianus' position would be safest, if he could get



Tiberius to set aside the Julian line in favour of the Claudian and make the minister emperor-regent for Livilla's remaining son. However, in his request for Livilla's hand<sup>7)</sup>, Seianus overreached himself. Tiberius knew that such a marriage would destroy the last hope of peace with Agrippina and her sons. If his letter to Seianus, as quoted by Tacitus<sup>8)</sup>, is not genuine, I think it most likely that he did write in a similar vein, declining the request, but at the same time raising hopes. According to Tacitus, he threw out a strong hint of advancement to come, though, if closely read, in non-committal terms. "quibus adhuc necessitudinibus inmiscere te mihi parem, omittam ad praesens referre; id tantum aperiā, nihil esse tam excelsum, quod non virtutes istae tuusque in me animus mereantur, datoque tempore vel in senatu vel in continone non reticebo." The phrase apparently meant the regentship for Nero - but only if it should become necessary for Tiberius to give up his office before the young prince was sufficiently trained. This, I suspect, may be the meaning of the somewhat loose term dato tempore. He had not seen fit to speak to this point in the senate on the occasion of the formal designation of the two princes; neither, apparently, did he think the time was right at the moment of writing the letter. If the old emperor remained in good health, Seianus' time might never come.

It was the same situation in which Tiberius had once found himself, and I do not think that the parallel did not occur to him. That he should not have become aware of Seianus' ambition at least through the latter's attempt to marry into the imperial family, would seem unbelievable; yet he continued to show his minister undiminished confidence. Unless one would see in this fact an imprudence or deliberate heedlessness not evinced elsewhere, it would seem to indicate a firm conviction on the part of the emperor that Seianus would not think of realizing his ambition by making use of his political and military means of power or by intrigue and crime.





The friendly relationship of two men, who worked well together, seems to have been enhanced by Seianus' devotion and readiness even to risk his life for the emperor.<sup>9)</sup> Tiberius may well have felt certain that Seianus' friendship for him ruled out any disloyal moves. Because of this friendship, too, he probably saw without concern the formation of a Seianian following and may even have thought it a desirable counter-balance to the Julians. That Seianus was in an excellent position to make a loose following of opportunists into an effective body of reliable supporters, that in the emperor's absence from Rome such a faction could easily be made to serve Seianus' personal ambition, that the minister's ambition could hardly fail to be intensified by existing conditions - that all these considerations should not have occurred to Tiberius seems improbable; we must suppose that his implicit faith in Seianus cancelled them.

From Tacitus' account, then, I conclude that Tiberius had complete confidence in Seianus' loyalty, but was probably aware of his ambition and may well have intended to gratify it in some way. But I do not think that he really meant to make Seianus emperor-regent if he could possibly avoid it; that he was so obviously putting off designating him as such publicly seems to me proof of this, and his reasons are not difficult to guess. The resentment and disapproval of the higher nobility, the hatred of the Julians, were enough to make the wisdom of such an appointment doubtful; and even if Seianus was willing to consider his occupancy of the imperial office as a regentship for some young Caesar, the question of succession would almost certainly be complicated further by such an arrangement. Openly hostile to the family with recognized claims to the succession, Seianus favoured a family, whose claims were at best secondary; besides he had children of his own and, as regent, might have others. The arrangement, while it would place an efficient man on the throne, would probably cause further discord. To leave Seianus guessing, however, was a mistake in itself - which Tiberius capped by withdrawing from Rome and leaving the minister a free hand there.



Now that his marriage to Livilla had been declined, Seianus' chances for the regentship lay more than ever in the destruction of Agrippina and her sons. He must convince the emperor that they were actively plotting against him; and the violent temper of Agrippina, the careless talk of Nero, the jealousy of Drusus, all unwittingly helped to play the minister's game, and he seems to have been able to produce thoroughly convincing evidence for his subsequent moves against them.

When Seianus began to strike at Agrippina's personal friends, the princess understood his purpose of throwing suspicion upon herself. In her uncontrolled temper she revealed also that such suspicion was not wholly unjustified. When her cousin Claudia Pulchra was attacked, Agrippina's taunting reproaches and Tiberius' reply brought to the surface what was in her mind: she, of Augustus' blood, ought to reign, if not directly, then through her son.<sup>10)</sup> Shortly after this, she asked to marry again<sup>11)</sup>, but Tiberius understood the implications and could not safely consent. Any husband of Agrippina's would of necessity be recognized as emperor-regent for the still inexperienced Nero, and with this family in their present mood, Tiberius could not allow such an enormous further strengthening of the Julian party. Not long after this, an incident at Tiberius' table, when Agrippina pretended to fear poison<sup>12)</sup>, put an end even to a show of friendly relations between them.

In 26 A.D. Tiberius left Rome to live in Capreae<sup>13)</sup>. If, as Tacitus thinks, Seianus was chiefly responsible for getting him out of Rome, I think he probably had little trouble persuading him. The advantages of exchanging for the vexation and friction of the capital a solitude, where first things could come first, needed hardly to be pointed out to Tiberius. As to Tacitus' further suggestion, that the now sixty-eight year old emperor may have wished to hide his secret vices (to which no reference has been made since I.4.5), I think that reason even more improbable at this stage than during his retirement at





Rhodes. Suetonius and Dio make the imperiousness of Livia the chief reason.<sup>14)</sup> Furneaux thinks he notices "a growing dread of conspiracies and of those in whose interest they might be supposed to take place".<sup>15)</sup> I do not think that Tiberius left Rome merely because he went in fear of assassination, but I believe it may well have been a decisive consideration that his temporary withdrawal might help to ease the situation there. I think it unlikely that he intended the retirement to be permanent from the beginning. As to his relationship with the senate, I think, Tiberius probably expected only beneficial results. From the beginning of his reign, in spite of his accessibility and in spite of his unceasing efforts to establish genuine co-operation, this relationship had been marked by a growing psychological isolation, and from his point of view the additional geographical isolation could make little difference. On the contrary, now the senate could act without the embarrassment of his presence, while he himself would be free from the petty business in which it tended to involve him. His withdrawal to such a distance would reduce the matters referred to him to a minimum and bring about, at least to some extent, what his proposals had urged in vain. The supreme guardianship could be exercised from afar.

Modern historians generally hold that Tiberius destroyed the last illusion of a partnership between Princeps and senate by his missives from Capreae, allegedly "carping or ferocious, ambiguous or deceitful"<sup>16)</sup>, and by making Seianus his intermediary and sole channel of access. I think that, between the exasperation of the emperor and the uncomprehending distrust of the senate, the prospects for achieving a partnership had already so dwindled during the past twelve years that Tiberius was placing his last hope in the remedy of his withdrawal; but it proved ineffectual, due to the emperor's own lack of vigilance, and the external circumstances then instead accentuated the already existing condition. The beneficial results, i.e. senatorial initiative and independence, for which Tiberius may have hoped, could not be forthcoming as long as Seianus exercised authority; and if the emperor had hoped to moderate his unpopularity by his absence from Rome, the choice of an unworthy representative could only increase it.





To consolidate his public and political position for the present as well as after Tiberius' death, Seianus took a twofold precaution. He began by forming a strong Seianian party in the senate, to which he won over even several former supporters of the Julians.<sup>17)</sup> The lack of a Tiberian faction had been one of the chief reasons for Tiberius' failure. There was now a Seianian faction instead, probably believed to be Tiberian in view of the exalted position of the minister, and therefore meeting with no opposition - so that Seianus could pursue unhampered his plans for the destruction of the Julians.

At the same time he bound some of the great nobles to himself and placed them in command of the more important provincial armies. Friends of Seianus were in command of Upper Germany, Lower Germany, and in supreme command of Moesia, Macedonia, and Achaia. Marsh thinks it unlikely that he failed to take similar precautions in Dalmatia and Pannonia, though the names of the governors there are not known. The two legions in Egypt and the one in Africa could be ignored. Marsh thinks that the fact that the governors of Spain and Syria were prevented from proceeding to their respective provinces was due to Seianus' instigation; having run out of consulars whose appointment he could venture to urge, he had to content himself, in these cases, with keeping non-supporters from joining their armies.<sup>18)</sup>

When Titius Sabinus, a staunch friend of Germanicus' family, was convicted of having planned the murder of Tiberius in the interests of Nero<sup>19)</sup>, it seemed evidence that, if Agrippina and Nero were not actively plotting themselves, their partisans were doing it for them unchecked. Tiberius wrote to the senate in connection with Sabinus, referring to the danger in which he now lived, whereupon Asinius Gallus asked that the emperor name his fears, so that the senate might remove them.<sup>20)</sup> Tiberius understood that Gallus was daring him to name Agrippina and Nero openly - which he wished to avoid; he had intended no more than a strong hint and probably hoped that the fate of Sabinus would



be sufficient warning.<sup>21)</sup> But Seianus, of course, did not leave off. Marsh thinks that Tacitus is right in asserting that Seianus' agents rather than the Julian partisans were urging Agrippina and Nero to flee to the armies on the Rhine or make a dramatic appeal to the senate and the people, and that such a course was prudently rejected.<sup>22)</sup> But since all reports on their conduct came from Seianus, Tiberius, at some stage, naturally was driven to the conclusion that they would cease to be dangerous only if they were completely removed from the political scene.

After Livia's death in 29 A.D., the emperor had Agrippina and Nero accused before the senate<sup>23)</sup>, though the nature of the charges was such as to avoid extreme measures even then and, possibly, leave the door open for a reconciliation, at least with Nero, when he should have learned his lesson. But Tiberius' moderation could avail nothing against the determination and resourcefulness of Seianus, who was virtually assisted by the perplexed and spineless senate. Junius Rusticus was certainly correct when he warned the Fathers posse quandoque domus Germanici exitium paenitentiae esse seni<sup>24)</sup>; that Tiberius did not wish the destruction of the house of Germanicus was clear from the nature of the charges. But neither can he have wished the senate to take no action at all. Whether or not the demonstrations outside the curia were genuine or staged by Seianus<sup>25)</sup>, they did serve his purpose; for the fearful and undecided senate, through its lack of initiative, allowed the matter to take on dangerous proportions, or so they could be represented to the emperor.

In his second letter, Tiberius repeated the accusations, which was necessary, if he did not want the Fathers to treat his requests as having been made without proper consideration and liable to sudden retraction. He reprimanded the Roman populace by edict and, to the senate, expressed his regrets that a single member's "fraus" should have publicly turned the imperial majesty into ridicule.<sup>26)</sup> Michael Grant's translation of the word fraus





as "duplicity" suggests anger at having been thwarted in the desired prosecution; but it could also mean a serious error without moral significance. The fact that a matter, which should have been handled with the greatest discretion by the most dignified body in the state, had been allowed to become the subject of demonstrations and rebellious speeches, was rightly considered an affront to the imperial majesty. But there is nothing to indicate that it was not a reluctant Tiberius who, albeit deceived by his evil counsellor, honestly saw no other way out but to take this step against his relatives. Tiberius concludes the letter by reserving the whole matter for his own decision. The senators, however, lately so fearful that they might get involved, now take the entirely uncalled-for step of assuring the emperor of their eagerness to punish the accused - paratos ad ultionem vi principis impediri testarentur<sup>27)</sup> - even, as it seems, before the trial.

After the banishment of Agrippina and Nero, Seianus' next step was to imprison Drusus, whose uncontrolled temper made him an easy victim.<sup>28)</sup> But Tiberius now designated Gaius as heir to the throne, with remarkable popular approval<sup>29)</sup>, and Seianus thought it best to plan on a radical destruction of the whole house. It is probable that he frightened Nero into committing suicide by having the executioner falsely tell him that the senate had condemned him to death.<sup>30)</sup> Then he set afoot a conspiracy against Gaius.<sup>31)</sup>

At some stage here, the warning of Antonia comes in.<sup>32)</sup> Marsh thinks it concerned Seianus' destruction of Germanicus' family rather than a plot to seize the throne, since Seianus could not wish the death of Tiberius until his own nomination as heir to the throne was complete.<sup>33)</sup> At any rate, the emperor continued to promote his minister, in order to avoid suspicion; to retrieve his great error, no other course was open to him. He agreed at length to Seianus' betrothal to Livilla.<sup>34)</sup> He bestowed on him proconsular imperium and held the consulship with him<sup>35)</sup>, his third, <sup>as Princeps</sup> the first two having been held with





Germanicus in 18 A.D. and with Drusus in 21 A.D., who were then the acknowledged heirs to the throne. Nothing was now lacking but the tribunician power to make the minister coequal with the emperor.

Tiberius' destruction of Seianus was a master stroke. He had managed to undermine him without alarming him unduly and to secure reliable helpers, when almost none were left to him.<sup>36)</sup> Opinions differ as to whether Seianus at the very last attempted a plot to seize the throne<sup>37)</sup>; it seems to me unlikely that he could have brought it off. The amazing promptness of the senate in condemning and executing him, the violent reaction of the populace, suggest a strong, long pent-up hatred.<sup>38)</sup>

Modern historians are agreed that Tacitus has given a misleading picture of the numbers of those, who were condemned and executed in the aftermath, and that there was no "Reign of Terror". Of those prosecuted, some were punished, some acquitted or spared, some committed suicide; it seems that an attempt to secure justice was made at all times. But the accusations and counter-accusations perpetuated the poisoned and feverish atmosphere, which seems to have smothered the last remnants of pro-Tiberian feeling, and Marsh thinks there may have been fresh plots in 33 A.D. and again in 35 A.D., when the emperor was staying at various country villas.<sup>39)</sup>



### The last phase of Tiberius' reign

The last phase of the reign saw the consummation of all the troubles with which it had been beset throughout. No repair was possible now for the senate's original refusal to give the emperor senatorial assistants; Tiberius, who had not seen fit to entrust top administrative offices to freedmen, as later emperors would do, continued the dangerous arrangement, which he had allowed to develop. Into the place of the evil Seianus stepped Macro, who, in the judgment of L. Arruntius, was the worse man of the two and responsible for more terrible crimes and national suffering.<sup>1)</sup> Tiberius' divorce from senate and people was now complete. In 32 A.D. the emperor could still write the Fathers in a tone of kindly humour to point out how pathetic and disgraceful their proposal was to give him a bodyguard in the senate.<sup>2)</sup> A year later he asked for, and was decreed, one.<sup>3)</sup> But a spontaneous assurance that he would be safe was not forthcoming; plots and trials continued, and Rome was unable to purge itself. Tiberius never returned. The emperor's grasp on imperial affairs remained firm to the end. He handled with forceful and effective diplomacy the troubles in the East<sup>4)</sup>; he alleviated a financial crisis at home<sup>5)</sup> and came to the relief when a fire caused great loss at Rome.<sup>6)</sup> But the succession problem exacted still more lives, and Tiberius never solved it.

Suetonius reports the emperor's statement that he punished Seianus quod comperisset furere adversus liberos Germanici filii sui; but the biographer doubts the statement, saying that Tiberius himself was responsible for the death of the princes - guorum ipse alterum suspecto iam, alterum oppresso demum Seiano interfecit.<sup>7)</sup> The emperor is generally held not to have been responsible for the death of Nero; but with regard to Drusus, many modern writers agree with Suetonius that Tiberius' treatment of that prince proves his statement a falsehood. The retention in custody of Agrippina and Drusus after the overthrow of Seianus,



and especially the killing of Drusus in 33 A.D., is taken by many historians as indicating a deterioration of Tiberius' character and the development of a tendency toward cruelty.

Computations of all the trials recorded by Tacitus and examined by his modern commentators on the whole agree that the emperor strove to secure justice at all times and generally seems to have preferred mercy to justice. In the one recorded case where he insisted on severity - that of Suillius, convicted of judicial corruption<sup>8)</sup> - it was later admitted even by his contemporaries that his judgment had been sound, and he is not criticized by modern writers for this instance of firmness in fighting corruption. Even the aftermath of the Seianian upheaval had been marked by a now generally admitted attempt to secure justice and to leave room for leniency and pardon.<sup>9)</sup> Marsh, who seems to have made a very careful computation, even considers that, in view of what had passed, the number of condemnations in connection with Seianus' overthrow is much smaller than might have been expected, and calls the "Tiberian Terror" a product of imagination and rhetoric.<sup>10)</sup> The facts furnished by Tacitus along with his rhetoric show that Tiberius preserved, as long as he was active in affairs of the state, his sense of justice, his moderation, and even his painful consciousness of his loss of popularity. In spite of this, many modern historians, when it comes to the death of Drusus, would allow Tacitus' often disproved assertions of cruelty to come into their own at last. While recognizing all the instances where the emperor evinced a sense of justice, moderation, and humanity to the end, they hold that at the same time his character underwent a deterioration to the point where he could commit a cruel murder, the necessity of which was doubtful and the best explanation for which was the savageness of the murderer. The inconsistency contained in this view would, it seems to me, bear investigation.

The whole tragic development and the consciousness of his own grave errors most certainly left their mark on Tiberius'





personality. When the emperor was informed that his son Drusus had died by poisoning, there was at first an even more complete withdrawal from society, which would indicate a more agonized suffering and a deeper melancholy.<sup>11)</sup> There was, I think we may conjecture, an extreme disillusionment and resignation regarding the future of the state; Tiberius would continue to do his best as long as he was at the helm, but he would be unable to make any provision for the future.<sup>12)</sup> His continued absence from Rome would indicate a continued deep - and hardly unjustified - distrust at least of the Romans, though his confidence in Macro, an excessive and misplaced confidence once again, would seem to qualify this point. Certainly there appears to have been a grim determination, after the first despair, to undertake, in Marsh's words, "a thorough house-cleaning to avenge the past and safeguard the future".<sup>13)</sup> Realizing that his undue patience with certain imperial conspirators had done more harm than good, there may well have been a resolve not to repeat that mistake and in the future to deal firmly with anyone, who should become dangerous to the state. If the safety of the state required the keeping in custody of such conspirators and even the execution of a relative, then the emperor must undertake it; but that he should have pursued such a course with a savage gusto and permitted himself a heinous crime, appears so far removed from the general tenor of his character as it seems to be taking shape from the findings of research, so far removed even from his character during the last phase, when it was battered and hurt by the blows of fate, that I think there is some justification for an examination of the facts and circumstances in connection with this alleged murder, as far as Tacitus' account allows us glimpses of them.

When the emperor discovered the extent of Seianus deceitful representation of the disaffection of the Julians and the amount of provocation, which had led the ambitious family on to their ruin, he had discovered the extent to which he himself, unknowingly, had become guilty. We need not assume that he bore such



a burden more lightly than any other man of moral integrity. It must have become crushing when he found that this error was one which he could not retrieve; for the old emperor, I think, probably saw no way out but to retain Agrippina and Drusus in custody - it was an inevitable consequence of what had gone before. When the minister was overthrown, the political agitation continued for years; would it have been wise to release Agrippina and her son into this atmosphere? Even if they themselves were chastened, some group out of their former following would be sure to involve them in some new intrigue, more dangerous to the increasingly unpopular Tiberius. In the meantime, moreover, Gaius Caligula had been designated as heir apparent and had been received well; if Drusus returned, there would be a repetition of the earlier rivalry of two pretenders, each with a following of his own.

In 33 A.D. Tiberius had Drusus starved to death and gave the senate an account of what had taken place. Tacitus' rendering of this account<sup>14)</sup> allows half a sentence to the actual charges laid against the prince and devotes the rest of the chapter to the degradedness of Tiberius who, after allowing his nephew to be maltreated and finally - for no reason at all - murdered in the most callous way, capped his cruelty by an inhuman report of these events to the senate, the purpose of which is not evident. All or much of this picture is still accepted by modern writers.

The view that the putting to death of Drusus was, to some degree, an expression of cruelty on the part of Tiberius receives support from the method employed in killing the prince. Why did the emperor not bring him to trial in the appropriate way, so that, when he had been condemned, his death would have been an execution, backed by the law, and could not be called a murder? The emperor's critics assume, along with Tacitus, that Tiberius was now beyond legal considerations and was primarily gratifying his own anger and cruelty, the existence of which





is now alleged, somewhat illogically, it seems to me, in spite of his admitted justice throughout the Seianian trials.

I think the possibility ought to be conceded that a man, who under the trying conditions of the Seianian aftermath had preserved his sense of justice, his desire to be judged justly and kindly by his people and by posterity, and who in the face of extreme provocation by his ambitious relatives for years had avoided exposing them as conspirators and punishing them more harshly than the safety of the state demanded, would not now that the worst was over and government and legal machinery running again, veer around to commit a murder which made mock of justice, which was bound to stamp him a criminal in the public view, and which would appear to be a complete reversal of his policy in his treatment of his relatives - at a point where his motives for such a reversal are less plausible than they would have been at any former stage. The action, moreover, unless it could be proved to have been absolutely necessary, would be impolitic. Drusus alive could be an asset and a point in Tiberius' favour one day; Drusus killed could only mean an immediate aggravation of his unpopularity. As a statesman, Tiberius, therefore, would presumably think twice before striking at the house of Germanicus once again, unless he saw no other way out; as a mere human being he still cared about his reputation.<sup>15)</sup> I think the possibility ought to be conceded at least that, if we had all the facts, the action of Tiberius might explain itself as something other than an unjustifiable crime or even undue harshness in dealing with a necessity of state.

Tacitus' account does not give us the facts we should like to have, but to some extent it allows us to apprehend them. What, we must ask first of all, could have been Tiberius' reasons for taking this course of action, in spite of his general sense of justice and in spite of the damage he knew it would do to his political prestige and personal reputation, unless he could





prove it to have been necessary? To the emperor at least, the reasons must have seemed compelling, I think; he must have been convinced that Drusus could not safely be allowed to live. Since imprisonment in the palace had been considered sufficient punishment for the prince's original offenses, I think we may conclude that his conduct as a prisoner in the palace had been such as to drive the emperor to this extreme step. The charges, which Tacitus reports, included immorality, plots to murder his relatives, designs against the government. They could have been the original charges that had led to his imprisonment, but it does not seem impossible to me that he may have become guilty of them afresh during his stay at the palace. After the overthrow of Seianus at least, his custody was perhaps not so strict that he was not able to have some contact with the outside world; indeed, one sentence in Tacitus' account seems to me to make sense only if we assume that this was the case: adstittisse tot per annos qui vultum, gemitus, occultum etiam murmur exciperent etc. That for several years several informers should have been employed to record the looks, sighs, and private mutterings of a solitary prisoner within his four prison walls appears unlikely; that a prince of the blood, whom for political reasons it was necessary to keep in custody at the palace, should be watched as to his daily doings and contacts, appears plausible. Drusus, we may gather from the epithets Tacitus gives him, was a brutish, violent young man<sup>16)</sup>, a second Agrippa Postumus perhaps. I do not think it unlikely that he should have availed himself of such freedom as he may have had at the palace to enter upon fresh plots against his relatives and fresh designs against the government.

The plots, presumably, would have been directed against Tiberius and Gaius Caligula. Seianus already had found it easy to lure Drusus into plotting with him against Nero, his older brother with valid claims to the succession. Finding himself debarred from the throne in favour of his younger brother, Drusus



may well have reacted even more violently. Any evident hostility towards the emperor and towards Gaius as emperor-designate would make Drusus an enemy of the state. I think it likely that, in Tiberius' original report to the senate, which presumably was intended to explain and substantiate the emperor's motives, the evidence of Drusus' hostility had been treated in greater detail than his sighs, secret murmurs, and curses. Tacitus has concentrated on the latter to build up his picture of the "suffering victim"; why did he omit the details of the charges to build up his picture of the "cruel tyrant"? Could it have been, because they were not so obviously fictitious or unconvincing as to support his picture of a savage, bloodthirsty tyrant? Could it have been, because they would have provided instead convincing proof and justification for the emperor's course of action? Marsh thinks it possible that in 33 A.D. there may have been some fresh conspiracy<sup>17</sup>); could it have been that Drusus was implicated and that there was flagrant proof of his rebellious activity? In view of Tacitus' suppression of facts in other instances (Marsh has shown it particularly in the rather similar handling of the case of Libo Drusus<sup>18</sup>)), I think there is some justification for the suspicion that the historian here, too, has left out what may have been damning details, because they would prove his picture of "bloodthirsty tyrant and suffering victim" as inconsistent with truth.

Even so, Tiberius' critics might say, even if the prince was guilty, was it necessary to kill him? Was it necessary to kill a relative, and that in a case which was bound to be construed as an act of revenge? Agrippina and Nero had simply been banished, and I think it possible that Tiberius might have preferred to take this course in Drusus' case as well; but he may have been deterred by the fact that in 31 A.D. a young impersonator of Drusus had been able to collect a following in the East<sup>19</sup>), which would indicate at least the interest, compassion, or devotion, which any stirps Germanici could still count upon even



outside Italy. Realizing this, and considering the contacts which the prince already had, I think, Tiberius may have felt that even an exiled Drusus would still represent too great a danger to the state and that, under the circumstances, no other course was open to him but to have him put to death.

If, then, Tiberius was convinced that Drusus could not safely be allowed to live, and if he was able to demonstrate to the senate the necessity of his death, why did he not bring the prince to trial and let the senate take the responsibility for his condemnation? I think that the senate's attitude during the trial of Agrippina and Nero furnishes an explanation. From the fragment we have of Tacitus' account of that trial, we learn that the emperor's accusation had laid such moderate charges as to make it quite evident that nothing harsher was intended than to teach Agrippina and Nero a lesson and at most remove them from the political scene. But the senate had failed to understand the emperor's obvious intention. In the fact of Tiberius' accusation of his relatives the Fathers had been unable to see anything but the desire to "destroy the house of Germanicus". This, however, they had reasoned, might have arisen from a passing anger and might later rue the old emperor, and on such considerations they had based their reaction. The possibility of an impartial investigation and a just meting out of punishment in accordance with the law, which the emperor as in so many other cases could and most likely would modify by his mercy, had apparently not even occurred to them. In their perplexed guessing about the emperor's psychology, they had thought it safest to do nothing at all, with the result that a difficult problem of state, which Tiberius had intended to be handled with dignity and discretion by an august tribunal, had become the subject of demonstrations by the mob. Instead of solving the problem the senate had aggravated it. Finally, when the emperor had repeated the charges, the senators had seen in that fact only a confirmation of his definite intention to "destroy the house of Germanicus"





and, reassured, had hastened to declare themselves paratos ad ultionem. Their action, so much was clear, would be prompted, not by legal and political considerations, but by an obsequious desire to carry out the wishes of the emperor, even if they suspected them of being unjustified and criminal. Tiberius had seen the impossibility of handling the Julian problem with the help of the senate in a just and detached but effective way; he had found himself compelled to reserve the whole case for his own decision. I think it likely that a dread of further psychological misgauging on the part of the senators, of their shrinking from sober action, and, as a result, further emotional demonstrations by the mob (to which even Drusus, praeferox, atrox, would be only stirps Germanici), may have appeared to Tiberius compelling reasons to rule out a trial before the senate. He felt it necessary to take upon himself the responsibility for a decision, which the senate, if it were asked to make it, would at best make for the wrong reasons and in an impossible, servile way, degrading both itself and the emperor. But Tiberius did not wish to avoid publicity; he was dealing with a problem of state and wished to treat it as such openly. He reported his action and his motives to the senate, still treating that body as having, constitutionally, such a high degree of authority that even the Princeps must defer to it.

He gave the charges which had led him to take this course - invectus in defunctum probra corporis, exitiabilem in suos, infensum rei publicae animum obiecit. I think, the words invectus in defunctum... obiecit are probably maliciously used for a sober statement of charges, of which even Tacitus does not say they are baseless. The chief purpose of the report, I believe, was probably to prove to the senate the prince's guilt and his danger to the state, and I doubt, therefore, that Tiberius in his original report confined himself to a statement of the charges in such vague brevity as given by Tacitus. If the report was



intended to demonstrate convincingly how dangerous a prisoner Drusus was, then, I think, it would probably have included detailed evidence substantiating the charges. This would explain the reading of a report on the prince's daily doings and sayings - factorum dictorumque eius descripta per dies - which may, I think, have contained other aspects than the pathetic ones on which Tacitus dwells. Tacitus' account seems to imply that the whole report dealt only with the prince's vultum, genitus, occultum etiam murmur, reaching a climax in his elaborate curses; but it is hard to see how Tiberius should have expected to impress the Fathers by the reading of a journal so monotonous and most likely to arouse their sympathy. That the testimony of the guard and the servants, who had abused the prince, should have been cited without including evidence that he had given extreme provocation, seems to me unbelievable. Tacitus' account is calculated only to arouse pity for Drusus, the son of Germanicus, whose last elaborate curse upon the emperor corresponds to his father's last call for revenge, and to arouse disgust for Tiberius, who seems to be merely publishing his own wickedness and shame. These psychological aspects, and the effect of it all on the senators, receive emphasis; the facts are treated as insignificant.

Marsh thinks it probable that the prince during his imprisonment actually went insane, that the report on his last days was intended to establish the fact of his death and to prevent another impersonation.<sup>20)</sup> The descripta per dies, as the context implies, covered the three years of Drusus' imprisonment; the journal was not confined to, but included, Drusus' last days. The reasons which Marsh suggests could, I think, have been part of Tiberius' purpose; but I doubt that Tiberius would have killed his nephew because he went insane. If the prince's insanity had been established beyond question, he would presumably have ceased to be dangerous and his death would not have been necessary. If Tiberius' report had the additional purpose of explaining why the emperor had chosen to have him killed without another formal





accusation, then, I think, the detailed report of Drusus' behaving like a raving madman may have been intended to show that there would have been no sense in a trial.

In any case, unless we assume that an exultant murderer recited a documentary and savage indictment with the record of all the prisoner's days and hours in prison<sup>21)</sup> for reasons of his own perverse psyche rather than law and politics, we must suspect that there was more to the original report than Tacitus' rendering would indicate. He says that the horrified exclamations of the senators were really due to their amazement and disgust at the emperor's seeming lack of human feeling; I think, they may also be taken as a sign that Tiberius had succeeded in justifying to them his extreme course of action.

Tiberius' letter to the senate on the occasion of Agrippina's suicide<sup>22)</sup> likewise seems to me to have been intended as a carefully substantiated revelation of the danger to the state which this family had constituted, although Tacitean rhetoric once again all but smothers the facts. This time the historian actually seems to accuse the emperor of baseless slander: enimvero Tiberius foedissimis criminationibus exarsit, impudicitiam arguens et Asinium Gallum adulterum, eiusque morte ad taedium vitae compulsam. Furneaux here makes the following annotation:

It is expressly stated (5.2.4) that no such charge was brought against her at her arrest; and Gallus, who must have been old enough to be her father, never appears as her partisan, and once at least tried to hasten her overthrow (4.71.3). The charge seems to be rightly treated as a fabrication. 23)

I think it quite possible that Tiberius at the time of Agrippina's arrest did have such information, but preferred to withhold it. We know that he had acted thus on at least one occasion<sup>24)</sup> and may have done the same in other instances.<sup>25)</sup> Here the publication of the charge would have made no difference to Agrippina's banishment, while on the other hand it would probably have involved prosecution of Asinius Gallus, which Tiberius





may have wished to avoid, if possible. We are not told why Gallus later was placed under arrest for three years and never brought to trial, but I think it possible that a close personal and political relationship with Agrippina and the absence of an open accusation may have prompted Tiberius to take this course. The emperor's foedissimae criminationes may have been a sober statement, finally divulging to the senate the facts which he had withheld at the time of Agrippina's arrest.

Since no member of the imperial house could die without rumours springing up about murder and poisoning, it was expedient to give a reason for a suicide, if one could be determined, and Agrippina's despair at the death of an influential friend may well have been a strong, if not decisive, factor in the decision to end her life. Asinius Gallus does not seem to have been on the side of Tiberius in 28 A.D.; it is quite possible that he was a political partisan of Agrippina's, his sister-in-law.<sup>26)</sup> Nineteen years before, in a discussion about possible candidates for the first place in the state, Augustus had graded Asinius Gallus as avidum et minorem. It is conceivable that the eager senator, at this time, was interested in the regentship for Nero. He was in his sixties in the years of Agrippina's widowhood.<sup>27)</sup> I think it unlikely that Tiberius would have made the statement on their relationship unless he had either proof or strong reason to believe it; otherwise this would be the only instance where he stooped to slander. Tacitus indignantly declares Agrippina to have been above such suspicion. aequi inpatiens, dominandi avida, virilibus curis feminarum vitia exuerat.<sup>28)</sup> To the word exuerat Furneaux makes the annotation: "It is not implied that she ever had them."<sup>29)</sup> He forgets that in 26 A.D. Agrippina, then about forty, had made a frank and feminine enough request for permission to remarry.<sup>30)</sup>

The report continues: eodem die defunctam, quo biennio ante Seianus poenas luisset, memoriaeque id prodendum addidit Caesar, iactavitque quod non laqueo strangulata neque in Gemonia pro-



iecta foret. Even if Tacitus has reproduced accurately the words of the original letter, the one word, which we know with certainty to have been supplied by himself, gives the whole passage a colour and a meaning, which disappear when we ignore that word - iactavit. The sentence as it stands gives an impression of cruelty, beginning with a childishly pointless observation, followed up by a savage remark which stamps the old emperor no less a monster than if he had actually committed the deed. Without the word iactavit, the passage may be read differently. The fact that Agrippina died on the same day of the year as Seianus two years before is in itself a meaningless accident, and although the coincidence might be noted, especially since the event was to be recorded officially, I think Tiberius was perhaps stressing the fact that Agrippina's death occurred a full two years after that of Seianus (rather than that it happened to be on the same day of the year), and that he did so in order to emphasize the entirely different treatment she had received. That, I think, explains the rest of the sentence: Tiberius reminds the senate that he did not have Agrippina strangled and her body thrown on to the Gemonian Steps. Being aware both of the sympathies, which the house of Germanicus enjoyed, and of his own unpopularity, I think it very unlikely that he was in a sarcastic manner publicly "taking credit for (iactavit) his leniency". The statement, I believe, may have been meant to remind the senate that, had the emperor wished to mete out such punishment to Agrippina, he could have done so at the time of the trial, publicly and with the backing of the law. Since he had refrained from taking such action at that time, he would not have her killed secretly two years later. The whole sentence, in the original, may have been, I believe, part of an emphatic assurance that Agrippina had ended by suicide and not by murder. I think that the words memoriae id prodendum were probably meant as a request to record the death of Agrippina properly as a suicide and as occurring two years after the execution of her rival.





The next sentence gives us, rhetorically, the pendant to the cruel tyrant, namely the trembling senate abjectly resorting to nonsensical flattery. actae ob id grates decretumque ut quintum decumum kal. Novembris, utriusque necis die, per omnes annos donum Iovi sacraretur.<sup>31)</sup> Michael Grant translates this as: "For this he was voted thanks etc.", an obvious translation; but what does it mean here? Did they really thank Tiberius thus formally for not strangling Agrippina and for not throwing her body on to the Gemonian Steps? It would seem incredible. On closer scrutiny, it appears that the word id may also be taken as referring to the whole set of facts reported in the paragraph. In that case, we must conclude, the senate thanked Tiberius for his handling of the whole case - although from Tacitus' account it is difficult to see just what was so deserving of their gratitude. And why the thank-offerings? The only other time we find votes of thank-offerings on the day of a person's death is in the case of Libo Drusus.<sup>32)</sup> Although Tacitus has represented this young man as foolish and harmless, research has shown that his conspiracy at the time was considered a great danger to the state<sup>33)</sup>, and the vote of thank-offerings was a sincere expression of genuine relief. The gesture is not repeated until now, when it probably again has a great deal more significance than Tacitus would have us believe. Tacitus' foedissimae criminationes, out of which he has specified only Agrippina's connection with Asinius Gallus, may well mean that Tiberius had at last revealed all the information he had, and that it was grave enough to cause and justify a similar reaction as in Libo Drusus' case. Tiberius' implied concurrence in the vote seems to me additional proof of this. Whether the senate's thanks were given to the emperor or to the gods, it would seem they were given for delivery from the dangers of which the Fathers had now learned.

If Augustus' wishes were still to be honoured, Gaius Caligula, the last of Germanicus' sons, must now inherit the throne. But Tacitus says that Tiberius doubted Gaius' character and hesitated about the succession.<sup>34)</sup> He considered his own grandson,





Tiberius Gemellus, who was, however, too young, and Claudius, who was thought to be weakminded. sin extra domum successor quaereretur, ne memoria Augusti, ne nomen Caesarum in ludibria et contumelias verterent metuebat.<sup>35)</sup> This reasoning may be Tacitus' divination, but the fact remains that Tiberius did nothing more about the succession. To keep Gaius with him in his isolation was a most unfortunate preparation for the future emperor, but to trust him in some office at Rome was probably out of the question. To commend him to the guidance of the senate, ask for senatorial officials to assist him - Tiberius can hardly be blamed for thinking it useless to try that again. He had in vain attempted a solution that would combine Augustus' dynastic wishes with Republican principles of government. The senate itself had made its decision for despotism, and Tiberius foresaw that Caligula would be a despot; the development could not be stopped. Disappointed, isolated, the old emperor made no further attempt to preserve freedom for a senate so manifestly indifferent to independence and incapable of putting it to the right use; he resigned himself to the course of tyranny and the ill-omened dynastic succession to which he was pledged.

In 32 A.D. Tiberius, writing to the senate regarding certain charges against his friend Cotta Messalinus, began the letter with a personal remark, which attracted attention as an expression of extreme agony of soul: quid scribam vobis, patres conscripti, aut quo modo scribam aut quid omnino non scribam hoc tempore, di me deaque peius perdant quam perire me cotidie sentio, si scio.<sup>36)</sup> I may include here a note by Furneaux, in which he enumerates various explanations of this passage:

Tacitus makes the words express the torment of an avenging conscience; Suetonius explains them by his sensitiveness to libels cited in evidence, or as a presage of the execration of posterity of which he had always had misgivings. Some of his apologists (as Karsten p. 50) explain them as self-reproach for having allowed himself to be so misled by Seianus; others as expressing mere weariness of the burden of life and cares of empire, or of the terrors of this crisis. 37)



All of these explanations assume that the letter began with an introduction of a general nature, not immediately relevant to the matter under discussion. There is yet another explanation: that Tiberius was answering the senate's letter in the order in which, according to Tacitus, the charges were listed, and that the agonized sentence has reference to the first point, namely Cotta's remarks on Gaius' manliness.<sup>38)</sup> I think it quite likely that it expressed, only half articulate, the bitter reflections and haunting apprehension arising from the shambles that the question of succession had become.

Tiberius died in 37 A.D., in his seventy-eighth year. He was buried with due ceremony, but there were also strong expressions of hatred at his death.<sup>39)</sup>



### Conclusion

If my interpretation of Ann. I.11-13 and IV.8-9 is accepted, the whole character of Tiberius appears in a new light. The old charges of hypocrisy and dissimulation had been based chiefly on these two scenes; if my interpretation is correct, they would seem to be greatly weakened. There are a number of instances where Tacitus asserts these traits, but they are either brought in as malicious pseudo-explanations or merely as empty rhetoric.<sup>1)</sup> There is no proof of deliberate dissimulation until we come to the overthrow of Seianus; and we are told that, until his suspicion was aroused, Tiberius had spoken to him freely and unguardedly - incautum intectumque.<sup>2)</sup> That, in order to retrieve his great error, the emperor was then forced to act with secretiveness and employ dissimulation over a long period of time is another matter. Those, who blame Tacitus for conceiving character as a fixed and unchangeable thing and who would maintain that the burden of government, absolute power, or the blows of fate "warped" Tiberius' personality ignore the yet more simple possibility that his secretive action on that occasion was necessitated by circumstances without being evidence of a deep-seated quality of character.

The rôle, which Tiberius by my argument was assigning to himself in his proposed new arrangement, would go far to refute also the allegation of diffidence, timidity, and subaltern mentality.<sup>3)</sup> No shrinking from the tasks of government, no reluctance to accept supreme authority and ultimate responsibility, on the first occasion; no feeling of weakness and insecurity, on the second; no hesitancy either. It is true that undecidedness and hesitation, or else deliberate ambiguity, furnish Tacitus' standard explanations whenever Tiberius is postponing some action. He represents him as unable to make up his mind about making a tour of the provinces<sup>4)</sup>, visiting rebellious areas<sup>5)</sup>, going to Capreae,<sup>6)</sup> and returning to Rome.<sup>7)</sup>





Yet in each of these instances, external factors and valid factual considerations are more likely to have caused delays or cancellation of plans.

I am inclined to agree with Marsh, who says that Tiberius showed no vindictiveness.<sup>8)</sup> I am inclined to reject, further, the allegation of moroseness. (These sinister accretions could easily arise on a character, which was not understood to begin with and was driven from the public view by tragic events, which were explained largely as the machinations of that character.) I find in Tacitus two explicit references to Tiberius' alleged moroseness, both of which, on close scrutiny, turn out to be merely the talk of people, couched in Tacitean rhetoric.<sup>9)</sup> On the other hand, even Tacitus records actual facts (borne out by Suetonius and Dio), which in my opinion go far to disprove the charge of moroseness. We get quite a few glimpses of a gentle but distinct sense of humour; as when the emperor refuses to accept a charge of perjury by the deified Augustus<sup>10)</sup>, pointing out that it is up to the gods to avenge their own wrongs. Or when he refuses to let a month be named after him, asking what they would do when they had thirteen emperors.<sup>11)</sup> Or when he - ludibria seriis permiscere solitus (those are Tacitus' words!) - points out the difficulties that would arise in the assembling of a body-guard to himself in the senate.<sup>12)</sup> This gentle humour must have stood him in good stead when he was dealing with the imperial women. Suetonius reports that, when Livia repeatedly urged him to enrol as a juror a certain protégé of hers, Tiberius agreed to do so on one condition - that the entry should be marked "forced upon the emperor by his mother".<sup>13)</sup> And when, in connection with the trial of Claudia Pulchra, Agrippina assailed him while he was sacrificing at the altar to Augustus and made a telling remark about her own blood-relationship to Augustus, he merely took her by the hand, quoting the Greek line: "And if you are not queen, my dear, have I then done you wrong?"<sup>14)</sup>



If he was not fond of shows and games, it seems that he did attend them occasionally<sup>15)</sup> out of a democratic sense of duty towards the populace. He seems to have enjoyed very much the company of learned and literary men<sup>16)</sup>; and his frugal and simple way of life need not be called austere. When he felt his end approaching, the emperor concealed his obvious decline by an affable manner, ordered the dinner prolonged, stayed up later than usual.<sup>17)</sup> According to Tacitus, this was all for the sake of concealment; but an unprejudiced reader wonders whether a morose and sinister person would meet his end in quite this way.

Tacitus' assertions of Tiberius' arrogance and haughtiness are either unsubstantiated<sup>18)</sup> or else seem to be derived from the emperor's "harsh" manner when dealing with some subject matter "harsh" in itself. When stipulating the sensible requirement that senatorial applicants for financial support prove their cases to the senate, Tiberius is called acerbus<sup>19)</sup>; an impartial critic would sympathize with the considerations, which prompted the guardian of the treasury to make the request for financial assistance a step that would not be taken lightly. An assertion of haughtiness still more inept occurs in connection with the discussion of a rise in the price of grain, which caused some unrest. Tiberius, after enumerating the provinces from which he is importing grain, tells the senate to restrain the outbursts of the populace. Then he remains silent; but Tacitus adds: silentium ipsius non civile, ut crediderat, sed in superbiam accipiebatur.<sup>20)</sup> The charge of haughtiness is maintained by many modern writers. If Tiberius did despise his contemporaries, as Marsh phrases it<sup>21)</sup>, the senators with their eternal sycophancy certainly had given him good reason; however, his exclamation "o homines ad servitutem paratos!"<sup>22)</sup>, if it is authentic, would be the only evidence that he ever showed his disgust. It is offset by many expressions of his respect and a sustained effort to make the Fathers deserving of respect; the great fact of his proposed reform, of course, speaks for itself - as does the reaction of the senate.



"He took too little pains to conceal his feelings", says Marsh and, again, speaks for many others. "He failed to realize, or wilfully ignored, the effect of his conduct on the public mind, as when he absented himself from the funeral of Germanicus."<sup>23)</sup> I think it more likely that he found his absence necessary in this particular case because of the conduct of the rest of the mourners. We have the testimony of both Suetonius and Dio regarding Tiberius' attendance at the funerals of friends and eminent citizens, which, in my view, do indicate an appreciation on the part of the emperor of "the effect of his conduct on the public mind".<sup>24)</sup> Tiberius is censured also as unfilial and careless of public opinion for his failure to visit Livia during her last illness. Again I do not think that he "wilfully ignored" the impression this would make on the pious Romans. He had had reason before to limit his visits; perhaps he feared some embarrassing last request of a political nature. The explosive political situation just then actually was sufficient reason to keep him out of Rome. I think he ought to be given the benefit of the doubt; he had accompanied his brother's coffin on foot for hundreds of miles and had visited even Agrippina when she was ill. That he did indeed care for the regard of his people and regretted to have to incur animosities in the public service is evident from his letters in connection with the proposed temple and the matter of sumptuary laws, and his speech, when he was offered the title of Pater Patriae.<sup>25)</sup>

As I see Tiberius, then, he was sincere and straightforward and, beneath an outward reserve and a melancholy which probably deepened over the years, a sensitive man, with a sense of duty and a conception of his office too noble to allow personal feelings of resentment to cloud his judgment and affect his decisions. The errors he committed were serious and had grave consequences, but it would seem that he failed chiefly through lack of political vigilance, undue patience, leniency, misplaced trust, and honest adherence to an unfortunate pledge, not through any evil character traits. When failure in his chief objectives,





betrayal by the man whom he had trusted before all others, and grave tragedies had driven him into isolation, he remained at his post with an iron self-discipline, though he suffered under the consciousness of his unpopularity, knowing it to be unavoidable in the proper discharge of his duties. When in dealing with an extremely agitated situation, he was at last forced to act with severity, I think the reason is clearly to be found in the external circumstances, not in a deterioration of the emperor's character. He had envisaged a supreme, but non-autocratic position in the background for his own self-effacing service to the state. Forced into the rôle of a monarch, however, he turned out to be a far-sighted, rational, humane, and energetic ruler.

He was able to make his reign one of peace and prosperity and to pass on an empire consolidated and strengthened. Its borders were protected by an army, disciplined and still essentially Roman. In the provinces, good administration and unhampered trade had aided prosperity and Romanization, and much valuable provincial blood and talent was finding its way into all ranks of the decimated Roman society. The levelling trends were kept in safe limits, so as to preserve Roman civilization, but not from a policy of nationalism and imperialism. Tiberius understood that the interdependence of all parts of the empire, concomitant with progressing integration, demanded the welfare of all who made up the empire. Whether he forbids the flogging of provincials to exact the taxes<sup>26)</sup>, or comes to the aid of communities stricken by earthquakes, or spends the state's resources on provincial roadbuilding rather than shows for the Romans, his understanding of the needs of the empire is always evident, though he did not, or could not, get at the root of what we recognize today as the basic problems.

He could not prevent the increasing foreignization and barbarization of the army and its gradual separation from the



civilian world, to which it would later dictate through foreign and barbarian emperors. He could not prevent the progressing transformation of the free Italian peasants into a colonate, no different from the rural provincials, who had no freedom and no share in the benefits of Roman rule. Roman civilization remained but a thin veneer, and when economic stagnation and the burden of taxes and liturgies impoverished the classes that had been the bearers of that civilization, it was overwhelmed by ignorant country masses and barbarian hordes. In the matter of the army, we know that Tiberius was aware of the dangerous tendencies and did what he could to check them. The social order he seems to have accepted, like all his contemporaries - no land reform, no employment projects for those on the grain dole, no taxes for the rich. But then Tiberius was a lonely leader as it was and in no position to impose profound changes on unwilling subjects.

The reasons for Tiberius' failure in his relationship with the senate and the Roman people lay largely in the unfortunate Augustan inheritance. When Tiberius acceded to the throne, the constitution for nearly half a century had rested upon a lie. The worst aspect of this lie, I think, was not the fiction that the Princeps' authority was based on the sovereignty of the senate and the Roman people, when in reality it was imposed upon them by a mighty military leader making himself the supreme civilian chief. If that was true at the beginning of Augustus' reign, his usurped authority was augmented by more or less unanimous public support as soon as the benefits of peace began to be felt; from that moment on the delegation of authority was genuine enough. The worst aspect of the lie, I think, lay not so much in the rôle of the Princeps as in that of the senate.

The appointment of a dictator for a certain period of time, to reduce a disturbed state to order, was an ancient constitutional device (and has been found expedient and effective by a great nation in our own days). But the wisdom behind this device is



that the office of dictator must be a temporary one and must be used only to remove the obstacles that prevent government by the people. In this case, the obstacles had been removed, and government by the people (here, by the senate) could have been resumed - but the people were not ready.

It should not have been too difficult to see where they had gone wrong. At home, they had allowed a proletariat to arise, which furnished volunteer soldiers, and by not providing for these propertyless soldiers they had let the army slip from their hands into those of individual generals, potential dictators, who so exhausted the state in civil wars, that by the time the last dictator could, unchallenged, consolidate his rule, the nation was ready to acquiesce not merely without protest, but with evident relief. In the provinces, senatorial exploitation and maladministration had done harm both economically and in causing hatred of Republican government, so that imperial rule, just and humane as it was, was welcomed with positive gratitude. In the empire at large as well as in Rome, the Romans' mistakes, in the last analysis, had sprung from their lack of social conscience; and if only this deficiency had been recognized, practical remedies for the mistakes, and their prevention in the future, should not have been beyond the reach of the Roman mind.

But the Romans had failed to convert past experience into a new approach and chose the one way, which required no new thinking - they kept the dictator on. The dictator was a most convenient one and as anxious as the senate itself to clothe the lie in the appropriate phraseology: that he had been delegated supreme administrative, legislative, judicial, and military powers by the senate. It was true, except that, with respect to the last, the senate was unable to do anything else but delegate the supreme military power to the man who already had it. And the Princeps continued to hold the military power, though on behalf of senate and people, through his personal authority, because he personally, not senate and people, was the soldiers' guarantee for provision and compensation. And that continued.





to be so after him, because no matter how sincere he himself may have been in his attempts to resign from part of his power<sup>27)</sup>, no matter how much Tiberius might actually discuss military matters in the senate, the Fathers evidently did not grasp the basic problem and its obvious remedy, that they must retain under their own control the state treasury and fill it well and use it to provide well for the army (excluding donations and bequests by emperors) and thus re-attach the army to the state. Instead they allowed it to be attached to the state through the person of the Princeps and thereby allowed the Princeps to remain a dictator. The Republican constitutional forms were illusory, not so much because they helped to veil the dictatorship, but because there was no true Republican spirit behind them, ready for the necessary steps to unmake the dictator, after his purpose had been fulfilled. A deadlock in the public mind prevented it from recognizing what those steps ought to be, even when they were suggested by Tiberius himself.

By the time Tiberius succeeded to the throne, the Romans had become so used to this hypocritical state of affairs, that in spite of the inevitable talk about restoration of the Republic, they were really hoping for nothing better than a new Princeps who would "play his rôle" as pleasantly as the old one. Strangely, some modern writers, too, seem to feel that skilfully playing a rôle prescribed for him by a constitution, which would be satisfactory so long as that rôle was played skilfully, was all that was required of Tiberius. Marsh, who calls the emperor "cold and reserved, lacking in tact, and inclined to be both haughty and aloof"<sup>28)</sup>, says: "Neither his natural disposition nor his training fitted him to play the part of Augustus, to lead while seeming to follow, to manage the senate while outwardly deferring to its advice, to respect the sensitive pride



of the nobility while yet maintaining a firm control over the government."<sup>29</sup>) This excellent summary of the secret of Augustus' success ignores, however, the inherent dangers of a constitution that rested partly on its deceptive Republican phrasing and partly on the successful playing of rôles. It substituted an agreeable atmosphere between senate and Princeps for the real objectives of government and led to such hypocrisy and self-deception that, after half a century, a great man's refusal to continue the farce and his attempt to bring back significance to the constitution were viewed only with uncomprehending suspicion.

Even modern historians, while they recognize Tiberius' genuine efforts to restore significance to the senate, seem to think that he coupled these efforts with strange hypocritical gestures after the manner of Augustus, which in Tiberius' case obviously were the less necessary the more sincerely he was proposing "Republican" reforms.

Modern writers, like Furneaux, who compare and contrast Tiberius with Augustus to Tiberius' disadvantage, start, I think, from the wrong premise that he was facing much the same situation as Augustus, but lacking the latter's genial ways, failed to solve the same problems. Augustus, once he had been accepted from necessity and gained the inevitable prestige as a bringer of peace, had based his relationship with the senate on a deliberately conciliatory attitude. Preservation of good relations with the senate had taken precedence over other problems of government, and in this way he had succeeded in solving his own task. But the task that faced Tiberius was a different one. The period of restoring peace and consolidating the Principate was over; the task before him was to deal with the results of that period and to guide wisely the unifying and levelling trends, which otherwise might easily work havoc, and to consolidate the empire itself. The paramount demand was for good administration, enlightened government, and incorruptible justice. If the senate did not understand this, then it was necessary to have recourse,



not to conciliation, but to education. So, where Augustus' genial ways had accentuated a policy conciliatory and pleasing to the nobles' egoism and sense of self-importance, Tiberius' bluntness accentuated one, which could not compromise where principles of good government were involved. But the incomprehensible policy with the aggravating harshness, far from educating the Fathers in Tiberius' principles of imperial government, caused a growing estrangement between emperor and senate from the very beginning of the reign, which culminated in Tiberius' withdrawal and complete isolation in Capreae.

Tiberius may have hoped that his retirement would ease the situation in Rome, cause the senate to act with greater independence, and allow himself undisturbed application to the more important tasks of imperial government. By placing Seianus in the spotlight as his representative he may have hoped to moderate his own unpopularity. But he committed the incredible mistake of raising his minister to a position of, at once, political prestige, administrative authority, and military power, and his excessive trust only cleared the way for that evil man to carry out his own schemes, virtually with the help of the subservient senate, which after frustrating the emperor's sincere intentions for twelve years now really found itself face to face with stark despotism. The army, the treasury, and the beginnings of a civil service, all under the emperor's control, had practically guaranteed a development towards despotism; but the moral and intellectual inadequacy, and the resulting timorousness, of the senate had made that development inevitable - in spite of all Tiberius' efforts to the contrary. I do not wish to minimize the emperor's grave errors in isolating himself from the senate and making an unworthy favourite his sole intermediary; but a vastly more serious factor in the development that ended in a virtual collapse of government seems to me to have been the senate's prolonged overall failure, of which the rise of Seianus and his evil doings were but one consequence.





The directions regarding a Julian dynasty, with which Augustus had encumbered his successor, worsened the situation further in that they first led to a high degree of political instability and, when Tiberius adhered to his fateful pledge, finally placed a despot and madman on the throne. It would seem that the only way to avoid the whole complex of succession problems and disasters would have been, at some stage, to set aside and banish, if necessary, Agrippina and all her sons, renounce the directions of Augustus, and make the worthiest man in the state Tiberius' heir. But Tiberius was not the man to renounce a promise. Again, if the emperor was guilty of errors in the handling of the succession problems, it seems to me that such errors are negligible if compared with the senate's failure to respond to Tiberius' original proposal, which would have precluded the very occurrence of most of these problems.

Had Tiberius succeeded in launching his constitutional reform, he would probably have changed the whole course of his reign. A senate, which could see in him the restorer of its independence and which had learned to use that independence so wisely that it need never feel his authority, would have held him in much the same esteem as once it had held Augustus. There would have been no eagerness to replace him, no support of pretenders; and the less noticeable the Princeps would have become, the less eager for early succession would have been the youthful heirs to the throne. A policy-making senate and a senatorial cabinet would have prevented a Seianus and a Macro and would have ensured a civil service under senatorial control. If, finally, a deliberate propaganda had succeeded in giving the senate new vision along with new scope, Rome's latent political genius might yet have stayed those trends that were to bring about its ruin. Tiberius, had he been able to change the course of his own reign, might well have changed the course of history.



Apart from the irresponsiveness of the senate, his failure in his great project apparently was due to an unfortunate temperamental handicap. When he found himself unable, by his example, to raise the senators to his own level of political thinking, he discovered no other means of influencing them and stimulating a mental growth. From Tacitus' account, one also gets the impression that Tiberius treated his great idea of constitutional reform rather too casually. The senators seem to have thought it best to avoid a discussion, and the emperor, finding that he could not make himself understood in unprepared meetings, apparently allowed the matter to rest there. He was incapable, it would seem, of a formal exposition of the principles on which he acted. He had no talent for the political game or else was disdainful of it. Possibly, at first, he may not have realized the need for systematic propaganda and a following in the senate, and later may have thought it hopeless. The direct results of the failure were the rise of Seianus to a position of trust and power and the collapse of government in connection with his overthrow. Where Tiberius had desired political liberality, he left an oppressive atmosphere, poisoned by delation. The senate was more subservient than ever, and a tyrant was soon to occupy the throne.

The course of the further development was clear. Army, treasury, and civil service would come still more exclusively under the control of the emperor, while the significance of the senate would be further diminished. Benevolent autocracy and paternalism would be substituted later for the old creative forces, but in vain. The Roman empire was doomed from the moment when the senate, after long self-deception under the Augustan Principate, made its decision for despotism just when it was being offered the opportunity of achieving as great an amount of freedom as the Roman state was capable of enjoying.



Notes

Introduction: The historians of Tiberius

- 1) Marsh, F.B., Tacitus and Aristocratic Tradition, Classical Philology, xxi (1926)

I. The constitutional situation at  
the time of Tiberius' accession

- 1) Marsh, F.B., The Reign of Tiberius, Oxford University Press, 1931, p. 26
- 2) Cf. p. 26

II. Tiberius' character and life  
up to his accession

- 1) Suetonius, De Vita Caesarum, ed. Rolfe, J.C., The Loeb Classical Library, New York, MCMXX, Tiberius, II.
- 2) Syme, R., Tacitus, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, p. 424
- 3) Ann. I.4.3
- 4) Syme, R., op.cit., p. 425
- 5) Marsh, F.B., The Reign of Tiberius, p. 223, comes to this conclusion and demonstrates it in the cases of Archelaus, L. Calpurnius Piso, and the elder Serenus. Syme, R., op.cit., p. 426, would see an instance of bitter resentment in III.48, when Tiberius, requesting a public funeral for his friend Sulpicius Quirinus, recapitulated his friend's career and told the senate how Quirinus, as adviser to Gaius Caesar in Armenia, had treated him, Tiberius, with respect while he was living at Rhodes; at this point, he could not, says Syme, "repress a savage reference to a hated name, that of Marcus Lollius, the author of discord and iniquity". Not even Tacitus makes the reference "savage"; if the emperor was explaining Quirinus' loyalty in a difficult situation, the mere mention of Lollius' attitude in that same situation does not, I think, indicate excessive resentment.





- 6) Suetonius, Tiberius, LI.1
- 7) Pliny, Natural History, XXVIII.23
- 8) Trever, A.A., History of Ancient Civilization, Vol. II, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1939, p. 395
- 9) Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. X, p. 615
- 10) Syme, R., op.cit., p. 426
- 11) Furneaux, H., The Annals of Tacitus, Vol. 1, Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1896, p. 137
- 12) Trever, A.A., op.cit., p. 391
- 13) Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. X, p. 609
- 14) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 159
- 15) Suetonius, Tiberius, XVIII. Marsh, op.cit., p. 46, says he had, as a general, acquired the habit of command, implying that this prevented him from finding the right tone in his contact with the senate.
- 16) Suetonius, Tiberius, VII.3
- 17) Suetonius, Tiberius, ibid.
- 18) Suetonius, Tiberius, X
- 19) Suetonius, Tiberius, XI.2
- 20) Ann. IV.15.1-3
- 21) Suetonius, Tiberius, XI.1
- 22) Suetonius, Tiberius, XIII.1
- 23) Syme, R., op.cit., p. 695, thinks that Tacitus came across the motive of secret vice in a subsidiary source, after he had written a large part of the first hexad, and that he then wished to explain the retreat to Capreae by the retreat to Rhodes. (Hence the sentence about Rhodes, inserted, Syme thinks, in IV.57.) He wished further, for coherence, to establish the motive at an early stage in the Annals (and inserted another sentence in I.4.4). I find myself in agreement with those writers, who think Tiberius' alleged debauchery and sensuality unlikely.



- 24) Suetonius, Tiberius, XII.3
- 25) Ann. VI.21
- 26) Suetonius, Tiberius, XIV.4
- 27) Dio's Roman History, Vol. VII, ed. Cary, E.,  
The Loeb Classical Library, New York, MCMXXIV, Bk. LV.11
- 28) by Krappe, A.H., Tiberius and Thrasyllus,  
American Journal of Philology, October 1927.
- 29) The Thrasyllus episode in the Annals, it seems to me, is  
a reflection on Tacitus rather than Tiberius. In his  
résumé of the emperor's character (VI.51), Tacitus says  
that, while Tiberius was a private citizen or holding  
commands under Augustus, his life and reputation had been  
blameless; apparently Tacitus does not consider the whole-  
sale murder of Greeklings a stain on either.
- 30) Suetonius, Tiberius, XIII.2
- 31) together with Agrippa Postumus, Julia's remaining son,  
who was, however, shortly afterwards banished as unfit  
to figure in the succession (Ann. I.3.4).
- 32) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 43

### III. The accession debate

- 1) Ann. I.11.1
- 2) Ibid. 11.3
- 3) Ibid. 11.4
- 4) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 139
- 5) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 49-50
- 6) Smith, C.E., Tiberius and the Roman Empire, Louisiana  
State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1942, pp. 29 and 215
- 7) in Smith, C.E., op.cit., p. 33, n. 87: O. Kuntz, Tiberius  
and the Roman Constitution, (Seattle, 1924), ... believes  
that Tiberius sincerely desired to restore the Republic.



- 8) This is the view of Tacitus and Suetonius; but modern writers mean, to some extent, the same thing when they speak of "the stage play involved in the very theory of the Principate" (Trever, A.A., op.cit., p. 391).
- 9) Walker, B., The Annals of Tacitus, Manchester University Press, 1952, p. 166.
- 10) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 46
- 11) Ann. I.12.1
- 12) Ibid. 12.2
- 13) The words modestia and pudor, which Tiberius uses with reference to his attitude towards the government of the empire, are taken by Furneaux in a purely personal sense. It seems to me that a man, who behaved with reserve and acted with firmness at all times, would not mean publicly to declare himself diffident or timid or bashful. Unless Tacitus has used these words to give the statements a colouring of ars Tiberii, I think, the emperor in this context must have meant them to indicate that he wished no undue prominence in his proposed set-up. Cf. Conclusion, n. 3.
- 14) Ann. I.12.3
- 15) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXV.2
- 16) Dio, R.H., LVII.2.6
- 17) Senatorial government may perhaps be said, under the circumstances, to have been the next best thing after popular government, since in the late Republic an increasing lack of a sense of political responsibility had rendered the proletariat unfit for an effective voice in politics.
- 18) Cf. pp. 25-26
- 19) For my conjecture regarding Tiberius' possible intentions with respect to the army, judging from his policy, cf. p. 38 and Ch. V, n.9
- 20) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXV.1
- 21) Ann. I.12.4
- 22) It is a pity that Arruntius' comments have not been recorded. If my interpretation of I.13.2 is correct, and if the grading "fit and willing" was the result of an unofficial sounding, then his speech here may well have been an attempt to assist Tiberius by giving the discussion the desired direction.





- 23) I am quoting from Furneaux's text, but follow Syme, who identifies this Lepidus as Marcus Lepidus (Syme, R., Marcus Lepidus, Capax Imperii, Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. XIV, 1955).
- 24) Ann. I.13.2
- 25) Ann. I.13.3. Syme doubts the authenticity of the anecdote and would see in it only a literary means for Tacitus to make certain points (Syme, R., Tacitus, p. 380 ff. and Syme, R., Marcus Lepidus, Capax Imperii, Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. XIV, 1955).
- 26) In trying to discover the facts behind this anecdote, I think, the careful tentative interpretation of princeps locus simply in its original meaning as the "first place" in the state ought to be conceded no less justification than the assertion that the words must necessarily mean the position of the Princeps. Only one Princeps had so far occupied the first place in the state. In his will he had exhorted the senate (Dio, R.H., LVI.33.4), and his successor on taking office had immediately proposed, to distribute the burden of that office among a number of men. It is in describing this very scene that Tacitus brings in the anecdote: the old and the new emperor are reported to have considered certain distinguished senators with a view to their suitability for the office that was the "first place" in the state. It seems to me that there is no less justification for the assumption that the emperors had the collegiate office in mind and were sifting and grading possible candidates for it, than there is for the traditional view that the discussion concerned potential usurpers of a throne, whose autocratic aspect it was intended to abolish forthwith. There are further reasons, which incline me towards the former possibility.

The strange inconsistency of the traditional interpretation with the subsequent fates of the four men in question has puzzled many commentators, who also note that Tacitus oversteps his own facts when he asserts (I.13.3) omnes praeter Lepidum variis mox criminibus struente Tiberio circumventi ant. Syme (Tacitus, p. 694) actually judges the anecdote "not good history". There is indeed nowhere an indication that Tiberius held any of the four senators in suspicion (until we come to the arrest of Gallus). On the contrary:

Piso was entrusted with a highly important and confidential task, which included in fact the guarding of Tiberius' position against a possible disloyalty on the part of Germanicus; Piso came to grief solely through his unwise conduct in the final stage of his assignment;



L. Arruntius was honoured by Tiberius with a prolonged governorship and, if my conjecture is correct, may have been kept in Rome for reasons suggesting a high degree of confidence on the part of the emperor (cf. Ch. VII n.18) Tacitus himself admits (VI.47.4) that Tiberius probably was not cognisant of the charge brought against Arruntius by Macro, and Dio (R.H., LXVIII.3) reports that the emperor actually quashed one brought by Seianus;

Lepidus (Marcus Lepidus; see Syme's reconstruction) lived out an honoured life and, as Tacitus himself emphasizes (IV.20.3), continued to enjoy unbroken influence and favour with Tiberius - aequabili auctoritate et gratia apud Tiberium vixerit;

That leaves only Asinius Gallus, who some sixteen years later was arrested and, without having been brought to trial, apparently ended his own life after another three years. Lack of information makes the reasons obscure, but during those sixteen years Gallus accumulated a record in the senate, which indicates both prominence and distinction in public life.

Altogether, the lives of these four senators hardly lend support to the view that, at the time of Tiberius' accession, they had been considered potential usurpers, against whom the supposedly suspicious emperor must be on his guard.

If the possibility is conceded, however, that they had been graded for the collegiate "first place" and that this grading represented the estimate of Augustus and Tiberius of their competence and personal suitability, then Tiberius' subsequent treatment of these senators becomes intelligible in each case:

The remarkable trust placed in Piso by appointing him governor of Syria as a counterbalance to the less trusted heir to the throne;

the keeping at Rome of Arruntius as an absentee governor, because, according to my conjecture, his presence may have seemed desirable to Tiberius in the sense indicated in Ch. VII n. 18;

the unbroken influence and favour, which the wise and moderate Lepidus enjoyed with Tiberius;

and even the treatment with due respect of the at least outwardly distinguished Asinius Gallus, whose later arrest may possibly have been due to some folly (cf. p. 71 and Ch. VIII n. 12) proving him, in a way, to be that which he had been judged to be sixteen years before - avidum (for high office) and minorem (for if he had tried to gain it by a liaison with the disaffected mother of the young heir to the throne, the method does not argue for a superior, and certainly not for an upright mind, worthy of high office.





Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 78 ff, after summarizing the history of the title "Princeps", concludes with the statement that "the term 'Princeps' in itself implied no monarchy, or even magistracy; but in fact stood for a combination of magisterial powers, so as to be contrasted as a kind of greater magistracy with the office of consul, praetor, or aedile". We may suppose that, at the time of Tiberius' accession, the public mind was still vividly conscious of the process, by which these powers had come to be combined in the hands of a single individual. In fact, the repeated conferment upon Augustus of individual powers for limited periods of time was a constant reminder of the multiple character of the authority, which under the force of a national emergency had been entrusted to a single man by a special arrangement, and the continuance of this arrangement was, if likely, not as yet taken for granted.

If even the title "Princeps", then, had connotations of a variety of powers in which the holder was supreme - accidentally, as it were - I think, the impersonal term princeps locus would have had these connotations perhaps even more strongly, at least at the beginning of the Principate. Only eventually could the term become identified with the single autocratic occupant of the "first place", and by the time Tacitus was writing, this was perhaps the case. Did the historian, then, in his own interpretation of the anecdote, equate princeps locus with the monarch, and did he take the four senators to be suspected potential usurpers? The words principis locus or imperatoris locus would have been unambiguous; yet Tacitus uses a vaguer term. The fact does not necessarily have significance, but in view of all that has so far been discovered about Tacitus' attitude towards the findings from his own research (I am referring particularly to Miss Walker's book, op.cit.), it does not seem absurd to question the point. If my assumption is correct, the vague term could be an instance, where Tacitus, while technically preserving his integrity, has tried to smoothe over an incongruous detail which, if brought out clearly, would have thrown grave doubt on his theories.

- 27) It might be suggested that Augustus and Tiberius were dealing with a situation similar to that which mutatis mutandis faces a modern "selection committee", whose list of candidates is also apt to include one "who'd love to come, but who just won't do" and a man "whom we'd like to get but can't tempt".
- 28) Cf. Dio, R.H., LVI.33.4
- 29) There would seem to have been, in Tacitus' sources, repeated references to proposals of constitutional reform - of a "Republican" nature (cf. p. 44).





- 30) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXIV.1
- 31) Ibid.
- 32) Ann. I.13.4
- 33) Ibid.
- 34) Ann. I.13.6
- 35) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXIV.2
- 36) Smith, C.E., op.cit., p. 34

#### IV. Tiberius' government

- 1) Trever, A.A., op.cit., p. 332
- 2) as Augustus had advised (Ann. I.11.7);  
Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 136
- 3) Ann. I.35.2; Trever, A.A., op.cit., p. 535
- 4) Ann. I.36.4; I.52.3
- 5) Ann. I.78.3
- 6) Suetonius, Tiberius, XLVIII.2
- 7) Trever, A.A., op.cit., pp. 328 and 534
- 8) Ann. IV.6.7
- 9) Trever, A.A., op.cit., pp. 533, 411
- 10) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXXIV.1;  
Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 128
- 11) Ann. I.54.3; IV.62.3
- 12) Ann. VI.17.4
- 13) Ann. VI.45; II.47;
- 14) Ann. VI.45.2; Suetonius, Tiberius, XLVII
- 15) Dio, R.H., LVII.10
- 16) Smith, C.E., op.cit., pp. 246-247;  
Marsh, F.B., opccit., p. 210



- 17) Suetonius, Tiberius, XLIX
- 18) Ann. VI.19.1
- 19) Cf. Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 207 n. 2 and p. 272
- 20) Ann. I.75; Suetonius, Tiberius, XXXIII;  
Tacitus adds, however, dum veritati consulitur, libertas corrumpebatur. Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 124, and  
Furneaux, H., op.cit., pl 278, are inclined to agree.  
But Tiberius had no other way of improving the ethics  
of juries; would it have been wiser and more beneficial  
to let them continue independent but corrupt? I cannot  
agree that the emperor is to be blamed, if his admonitions,  
instead of improving ethics, aggravated subservience.
- 21) Ann. IV.31.2
- 22) Ibid. 31.5
- 23) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 156
- 24) Ann. II.47. Another time, two cities, which had suffered  
an earthquake, were granted a remission of tribute for three  
years (Ann. IV.13.1).
- 25) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 151-153
- 26) This seems later to have had the unforeseen result of  
forcing Roman officials to court the assemblies; cf. the  
speech of Thrasea Paetus, Ann. XV.20-22.
- 27) Ann. I.80.2; IV.6.5; VI.39.3
- 28) Ann. I.80. For a modern commentator, who also remained  
unconvinced, see Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 157.
- 29) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 160
- 30) Ann. IV.15.4; IV.37; IV.38.4
- 31) Ann. III.40. Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 138, explains this  
by Tacitus' statement (Ann. I.71) "that after the campaign  
of Germanicus in A.D. 15, Gaul, Spain, and Italy had offer-  
ed him arms, horses, and money, to repair his losses. We  
may conjecture that many of the civitates of Gaul had at  
this time made voluntary contributions which the government  
continued to exact afterwards, and we may also conjecture  
that in many cases they had borrowed from Roman money-  
lenders and traders, which obligations they now found  
difficulty in meeting."



- 32) Pliny, Natural History, 30.13
- 33) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 210
- 34) Trever, A.A., op.cit., p. 412
- 35) Ann. II.26.4
- 36) Ann. IV.72
- 37) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 141 ff
- 38) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 211, 142
- 39) Ibid.
- 40) Ann. II.64-66; III.39; IV.46-51
- 41) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 147
- 42) Ann. II.42
- 43) Ann. II.43; II.56. Trever, A.A., op.cit., p. 393
- 44) Ann. II.56
- 45) Ann. VI.41-44
- 46) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 147
- 47) Ann. II.52.1; III.20-21; III.31.1; III.73-74; IV.23-26
- 48) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 148
- 49) Ann. III.35.1
- 50) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 150
- 51) Ann. II.42.4. That, I think, must be the explanation for her writing to Archelaus to summon him to Rome. Cf. Dio, R.H., LVII.12.1-2
- 52) Ann. I.3.4; Suetonius, Tiberius, L.3; Dio, R.H., LVII.12.1-4
- 53) Suetonius, Tiberius, L.2; Dio, R.H., LVI.47.1; LVII.5-6; Ann. I.8.2
- 54) Ann. I.14.1
- 55) Ann. I.72.5; IV.57.4; Suetonius, Tiberius, L.2; LI.1; Dio, R.H., LVII.12.5





- 56) Ann. IV.6
- 57) Suetonius, Tiberius, LV
- 58) Ann. I.24.3
- 59) Ann. IV.2.4
- 60) Ibid.
- 61) Ann. IV.2.1-3

V. Tiberius and the senate

- 1) Ann. I.15.1-2
- 2) Dio, R.H., LVIII.21.3
- 3) Dio, R.H., LVII.4; LVII.5; Suetonius, Tiberius, XXXI.1
- 4) Dio, R.H., LVII.11; Suetonius, Tiberius, XXVI-XXVII
- 5) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXIX; Dio, R.H., LVII.8.1
- 6) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXXI. An embassy from the senatorial province of Africa, which approached the emperor, was forced to go to the senate instead.
- 7) such as the city prefecture, which had been made a permanent office, and the oversight of the banks of the Tiber, which continued to be carried out by a permanent board. (Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 125-126).
- 8) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 118 ff.
- 9) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXX; Ann. I.25.3; III.12.2  
Tiberius' discussion of army matters in the senate can hardly have been an empty gesture. If he had intended to perpetuate the existing situation, i.e. if he had intended to keep the army bound to himself, and only through his own person bound to the state, then such a gesture would have amounted to a quite unnecessary weakening of his position.  
We cannot, of course, do more than conjecture what eventual arrangement Tiberius may have had in mind, since the senate failed to show the sense of responsibility for which the emperor seems to have hoped. One might suggest, however, that he envisaged perhaps an arrangement somewhat along the



following lines: If the senate should prove itself capable of undertaking responsibility for the army, the army would eventually come to look for compensation to "the state" rather than the person of the Princeps and would thus become re-attached to the state directly instead through the person of the Princeps. The Princeps in that case would no longer merely inherit the supreme command from his predecessor, but would require the consent of the senate - which, consequently, might be withheld in the case of a pretender, who would be likely to employ the army for purposes clearly not in the interests of the state. Such a development would, of course, have been dependent upon the senate's retaining at least joint control with the Princeps over the treasury. But judging from Tiberius' overall policy and evident constitutional intentions regarding the senate, I think that, if the senate had provided a "minister of finance" for the "cabinet" or had at least shown responsibility in handling the state's resources, the emperor would have considered such a development as part of his intended reform.

The Princeps, then, would continue to keep the army on his own non-partisan level, out of the reach of political factions; but a responsible senate would be able to check an irresponsible Princeps. The idea was sound in principle, and I think that Tiberius may well have been prompted to this consideration by very concrete apprehensions while Germanicus was his heir apparent. The German campaigns of that prince, in which Roman blood was being shed to no purpose and which involved unjustifiable and severe impositions upon the Gauls, were viewed with disapproval by responsible elements in Rome. If Germanicus, as Princeps, were allowed a free hand in the use of the army, the consequences might be disastrous. It seems logical, therefore, that the necessity should have occurred to Tiberius of preparing some kind of check for his reckless nephew and for any irresponsible future Princeps; and if he tried to achieve this by strengthening the senate's understanding of army matters and its sense of responsibility for the army, the method would seem to have been entirely in line with the rest of his constitutional policy.

When the senate failed to live up to his expectations, and the disturbed political situation in Rome forced Tiberius to retain undivided and unchallenged authority over the army, he asserted that authority angrily in at least one recorded case (Ann. VI.3.1-3).

- 10) Ann. I.75.5; II.37.2; II.48.1
- 11) Ann. I.76; I.79
- 12) Ann. III.60-63
- 13) Ann. III.35.1



- 14) Ann. I.75.5
- 15) Ann. II.37-38
- 16) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 133
- 17) Ann. II.33
- 18) Ann. III.52-54
- 19) Ibid.
- 20) Ann. IV.37-38
- 21) Ann. IV.38.6
- 22) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 117
- 23) Ann. I.11.5; IV.12.1
- 24) Ann. III.47.4-5; III.59.2; IV.62
- 25) In some cases, e.g. Falanius and Rubrius (I.73) and Apouleia Varilla (II.50), Tiberius was on hand to intervene; in the case of Clutorius Priscus (III.49-51) he came too late. In the case of Agrippina and Nero, the senators apparently did not even wait for the results of an investigation to declare themselves paratos ad ultionem (V.5).
- 26) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 144
- 27) In the maiestas charge against Granus Marcellus (I.74), Tiberius lost his temper - in spite of Tacitus' representation, I think because of exasperation rather than anger. See also III.70; VI.5-7; VI.30.
- 28) Ann. III.65.2

#### VI. The struggle for the succession

- 1) Ann. IV.6.2. Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 44, 67, 87
- 2) Syme, R., op.cit., pp. 563, 589
- 3) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 86-87
- 4) Ann. I.72.4
- 5) Ibid.





- 6) Ann. I.72.5. Suetonius, Tiberius, XXVIII, says Tiberius was patient of abuse and slander and often asserted that in a free country there should be free speech and free thought. Later (Tiberius, LVIII and LXI) he alleges the contrary, but Marsh (op.cit., p. 107) points out that he gives no names in his assertions of cruelty towards offenders, and Tacitus is silent regarding most of these.
- 7) Ann. II.50.2-3. Suetonius, Tiberius, XXVIII.
- 8) Ann. IV.42. C. Cominius (IV.31) was convicted but pardoned. see Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 173
- 9) Ann. IV.21; IV.42; VI.31.1
- 10) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 200
- 11) Punishment of false accusations is mentioned Ann. IV.4.1; IV.31; VI.7.1; XVI.29.3 and Suetonius, Tiberius, LXI. Cf. Ann. VI.3.4-5.
- 12) Ann. IV.30
- 13) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 109
- 14) Ann. I.14.4
- 15) Ann. II.26.4-6
- 16) Ann. I.33.2. The alleged enmity of Tiberius towards Germanicus is the whole point of the prince's last words (II.71). See also III.3.1.
- 17) Ann. II.43.1-4. Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 88
- 18) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 89. Tacitus says he looked down on Tiberius' children, but mentions no specific unfriendliness towards Germanicus (II.43.4).
- 19) Ann. II.43.5
- 20) Ann. III.10-19. Tacitus gives another version, according to which Piso had received written instructions, and Suetonius (Tiberius III) says that Piso would have produced them, had they not been taken from him when he showed them secretly. If such written instructions really did exist, I think, producing them would not have made any difference in the proceedings. They would probably have confirmed what was known anyway, that Tiberius had employed Piso to restrain Germanicus in his political and possible military moves; but beyond that they would hardly have incriminated the emperor or saved Piso. That Piso did not produce them is explained by Marsh as an attempt to prevent the public wrath from turning against the emperor, who would then be unable to shield Piso's sons.



- 21) Ann. III.3.1. Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 224
- 22) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXIII
- 23) Ann. I.69.4-7
- 24) Especially Ann. III.4.3, referring to Agrippina as solum Augusti sanguinem, seems to me to have telling political overtones. In IV.52.4, Agrippina makes her point directly to Tiberius.
- 25) Ann. IV.4.3
- 26) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 163
- 27) Ann. IV.3.1-2
- 28) Ann. IV.3.3-6
- 29) The charge was made by Apicata, the divorced wife of Seianus (Dio, R.H., LVIII.11.6) and confessed to under torture by the slaves, who were alleged to have been accomplices in the poisoning (Ann. IV.11.4).
- 30) Ann. IV.8
- 31) Ann. IV.9.1
- 32) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 166 n. 2

VII. Seianus

- 1) Ann. IV.6
- 2) Ann. IV.17.1; IV.36.1
- 3) Tacitus' sources were chiefly favourable to Germanicus, and the official records, which he consulted, may not have revealed the whole truth, since Tiberius would not have wished to expose Agrippina and Nero, unless and until he felt it necessary to set the Julian line aside altogether (Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 169).
- 4) Thus the case against the elder Serenus may have had something to do with that against Silius; Marsh thinks they may have been in league to stir up sedition in Gaul and Upper Germany, with a view perhaps to securing the command of an army for Silius as a champion of the Julian party (Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 169 n. 1).



- 5) Marsh, op.cit., p. 173, thinks it possible that the case of Votienus Montanus was connected with those against Silius and Serenus.
- 6) Ann. IV.30.3-5
- 7) Ann. IV.39
- 8) Ann. IV.40
- 9) Ann. IV.59.4
- 10) Ann. IV.52
- 11) Ann. IV.53. Tiberius may have known or suspected that she had Asinius Gallus in mind.
- 12) Ann. IV.54
- 13) Ann. IV.57
- 14) Dio, R.H., LVII.12.6; Suetonius, Tiberius, LI.1
- 15) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 147
- 16) Syme, R., op.cit., p. 426
- 17) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 178 n. 2, points out that Fulcinius Trio, Q. Servaeus, and P. Vitellius took part in the prosecution of Piso and were involved in the fall of Seianus.
- 18) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 191. Another explanation is possible. In the discussion regarding candidates for the first place in the state, L. Arruntius had been considered fit and willing (I.13.2). In 15 A.D. Tiberius had appointed him to study a possible control of the level of the Tiber (I.76.2). From Dio, R.H., LXVIII.3, we learn of Seianus' accusation of Arruntius and Tiberius' quashing it; Tacitus (Ann. VI.7.1) reports that the accusers were punished. There is nowhere an indication of an animosity between the two men. If Tiberius had distrusted Arruntius, as Suetonius says (Tiberius, LXIII.2), he would probably have prevented his election as governor of Spain and would hardly have kept him on the job as an absentee governor year after year. Though the arrangement may have been favourable to Seianus' plans in the sense Marsh suggests, I do not think that the minister could have persuaded Tiberius to continue it for years, unless the emperor himself wished it so. And





why should Seianus then have trumped up a charge against Arruntius, when his condemnation would cancel the arrangement and make a new governor for Spain necessary?

Now, if Tiberius was favourably disposed towards Arruntius, and if he wished him to enjoy the honour of long tenure like other good governors, then we may assume that Tiberius had reasons to desire his presence in Rome rather than prevent his presence in Spain, and these reasons may well have been the same as those that placed Arruntius on the list of candidates in 14 A.D.: If it should become necessary for the emperor to give up the business of government before his successor was sufficiently trained, he would have an able, distinguished, and trusted senator to fall back on, beside the equestrian Seianus, for whose exalted position Tiberius knew he was being criticised (IV.40.7).

Whether or not Arruntius had been sounded privately in 14 AD, I cannot imagine that the emperor did not give this distinguished man an acceptable reason why he was keeping him in Rome. If Arruntius had been forced to interpret this treatment as an expression of distrust, he would presumably have resigned rather than endure it for ten years. In his last speech, which Tacitus has recorded (VI.48.2-5), Arruntius says that Seianus had long hated him and after that Macro. He says that Tiberius has been transformed and deranged by power, but his words sound rather like an attempt to explain and excuse. Evidently he holds Macro rather than Tiberius responsible for his false accusation, and Tacitus mentions inimicitias Macronis notas in Arruntium, adding that the invalid emperor may have known nothing about the case. Macro's services in the overthrow of Seianus and his courtierlike talents seem to have established him automatically and firmly in the latter's position, and Tiberius perhaps was glad thus to be spared a repetition of his difficult request to the senate. I think it likely, however, that both Seianus and Macro were aware for what eventualities the emperor was keeping Arruntius in Rome, and that this was the reason for their hatred of him.

Aelius Lamia, who as governor of Syria had not been permitted to take up residence there, was also a distinguished and able man, whose prestige, as Tacitus tells us, was enhanced by the absentee governorship, which may or may not have been misinterpreted. Lamia subsequently became city prefect (VI.27.2). There is no indication that Tiberius was unfavourably disposed to him either, and his reasons for keeping him at home may have been similar to those for which Arruntius was detained.



- 20) Ann. IV.71.3
- 21) I follow Marsh here (op.cit., p. 184 n. 2).
- 22) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 184
- 23) Ann. V.3.2-4. Suetonius, Tiberius, LXIV. If it is true, as Suetonius says, that they were moved in chains, it would indicate that their guilt and their danger was greater than was brought out in the trial.
- 24) Ann. V.4.1-2
- 25) Ann. V.4.3-5
- 26) Ann. V.5.1
- 27) Ann. V.5.2
- 28) Ann. IV.60.5; VI.24.1
- 29) Dio, R.H., LVIII.8.1
- 30) Suetonius, Tiberius, LIV.2
- 31) Ann. VI.3.4-5
- 32) Josephus, Antiquities, 18.6.6
- 33) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 193 n. 1, pp. 304-310
- 34) Dio, R.H., LVIII.3.9, says the betrothal was to Julia, daughter of Drusus, but I am inclined to follow Marsh, who thinks it must have been Livilla (op.cit., p. 192 n.1).
- 35) Dio, R.H., LVIII.4.3
- 36) Dio, R.H., LVIII.9.2. Naevius Sertorius Macro, whom Tiberius made commander of the Praetorian Guard, Memmius Regulus, one of the consuls, and Graecinius Laco, commander of the Night Watch, took care of the arrest and execution.
- 37) Marsh (op.cit., pp. 308-310) believes that Tiberius definitely intended to make Seianus his successor and that the minister, therefore, had no motive for a rebellion. However, if Seianus had understood from Tiberius' letter that his regentship would materialize only if the old emperor would have to give up before Nero (or later Gaius) could follow him directly, then it is conceivable that he was at least considering a coup de main. Dio, R.H., LVIII.8.3, says that he regretted not having undertaken a rebellion while he was consul.



- 38) Dio, R.H., LVIII.10-11  
39) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 207, 216

VIII. The last phase of the reign

- 1) Ann. VI.48.5  
2) Ann. VI.2.5  
3) Ann. VI.15.5  
4) Ann. VI.31-37; 41-44. Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 211-214  
5) Ann. VI.16-17  
6) Ann. VI.45.1  
7) Suetonius, Tiberius, LXI.1  
8) Ann. IV.31.5  
9) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 200, 287  
Smith, C.E., op.cit., pp. 179-181  
10) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 200  
11) Dio, R.H., LVIII.13  
12) cf. Dio, R.H., LVIII.23.4  
13) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 199  
14) Ann. VI.23.4  
15) Ann. VI.26.2  
16) Ann. IV.60.5-6  
17) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 206  
18) Marsh, F.B., Tacitus and Aristocratic Tradition  
19) Ann. V.10  
20) Marsh, F.B., The Reign of Tiberius, p. 208  
21) That is the conception of Syme (op.cit., p. 424)  
22) Ann. VI.25  
23) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 626





- 24) Ann. III.23.4
- 25) In the case of the elder Serenus (Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 171).
- 26) It is difficult to see just where Gallus stood politically, His participation in the inauguration debate had ended in flattery of Tiberius (I.12.5). In 16 A.D. he moved that officials should be elected five years in advance, which would seem to have been intended, and is evidently taken so by Tacitus, as a means of making magistrates, who had been assured of their appointment, more independent (II.36.1) - although, seeing Tiberius' efforts to achieve just that, it is hard to understand why any of the senators should have thought such underhand methods necessary. In connection with the trial of Gaius Silius and his wife Sosia Galla in 24 A.D.; Tacitus states that Tiberius hated Sosia because she was a friend of Agrippina (IV.19.1); upon her conviction, Asinius Gallus proposed Sosia's banishment and confiscation of half of her property (IV.20.2). In 24 A.D. also, upon the condemnation of the elder Serenus, who, if Marsh's conjecture is correct, had plotted in the interests of Agrippina, Gallus proposed his confinement on a waterless island (IV.30.2; Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 171). In 28 A.D. Gallus proposed that the emperor should name to the senate the source of his fears, which, if Marsh's interpretation is right, would indicate partisanship of Agrippina (IV.71.3; Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 184 n. 2). But this record up to his joining the Julian camp, is perhaps an expression of eagerness only, and not of political orientation.
- 27) He was coeval with Tiberius (Syme, R., op.cit., p. 381).
- 28) Ann. VI.25.3
- 29) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 626
- 30) Ann. IV.53.1.: Subveniret solitudini, daret maritum; habilem adhuc iuventam sibi, neque aliud probis quam ex matrimonio solacium...
- 31) Ann. VI.25.5
- 32) Ann. II.32.4
- 33) Marsh, F.B., Tacitus and Aristocratic Tradition
- 34) Ann. VI.46
- 35) Ann. VI.46.3
- 36) Ann. VI.6.1
- 37) Furneaux, H., op.cit., p. 601
- 38) Ann. VI.5.1
- 39) see Furneaux 's summary, op.cit. p. 656



### Conclusion

- 1) Tacitus says that Tiberius gave hypocritical reasons for the recall of Germanicus from Germany (II.26.6); that the emperor could have stopped the activities of Libo Drusus, but hypocritically and malevolently preferred to note them. During the Sacrovir rebellion (III.44.4), Tacitus says, Tiberius concealed his concern, but adds that the emperor may have known that the gravity of the trouble had been exaggerated. A very far-fetched allegation of secrecy occurs in I.76.3: Tiberius counters the proposal to consult the Sibylline Books regarding the flood of the Tiber with a suggestion to control the water level - perinde divina humanaque obtegens.
- 2) Ann. IV.1.3
- 3) Furneaux, who believes in Tiberius' diffidence, thinks he may have accepted the imperial office, because "his Rhodian retirement must have taught him that, for one so placed, the only safety was to rule" (op.cit., p. 139). I do not think that this reflection was necessary for Tiberius to overcome an extreme reluctance. He probably knew very well that, for the moment, he was indispensable; and it was only as ruler that he could bring about a restoration of freedom to his people, as he envisaged it. Once he got his proposal accepted, the reasoning suggested by Furneaux would no longer apply: If political ambition could seek influence and distinction in the senate, but were largely cut off from political activity on the throne, then the throne would hardly be coveted by the type of hotheaded pretender likely to dispose of suspected rivals by violence.
- 4) Ann. IV.4.4
- 5) Ann. I.47.5; III.47.3
- 6) Ann. IV.57.1
- 7) Ann. VI.1.1; VI.15.6; VI.39.2;
- 8) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., pp. 80, 171 n. 1, 172 n. 3, 223. Syme maintains the charge of vindictiveness and gives three examples: "It was alleged that in the first months of the reign (Tiberius) hastened the end of his former wife, the exiled Julia. That cannot be substantiated; but he ordered the execution of her lover, Sempronius Gracchus, an ancient enemy" (Syme, op.cit., p. 423). That cannot be substantiated either; Tacitus himself gives another version, although he believes the first (I.53). Syme continues: "Tiberius disliked Asinius Gallus. He arranged that the missive denouncing the septuagenarian consular should reach the senate while



he was being entertained at Capreae." Tacitus says that Tiberius disliked Asinius Gallus, because he had shown arrogance in marrying Vipsania and because he was over-ambitious (I.12.6), but the record of the senator's motions in the senate gives rise to the suspicion that he may simply have exasperated the emperor. Since we do not know what the charges against Gallus were - the closer he was to Agrippina, the graver they may have been - I think it somewhat rash to infer vindictiveness from Tiberius' use of deceit in his arrest.

- 9) Ann. I.76.6. Tacitus repeats various reasons given by the people for the emperor's absence from a gladiator show given in the names of Germanicus and Drusus - his dislike of crowds, or his natural glumness, or unwillingness to be compared with Augustus, who had cheerfully attended. In III.37.3, Tacitus again records public opinion (of Drusus): Living sociably in Rome, he seemed a moderating influence on his father's solitary designs. Even Drusus' extravagances were compared favourably with the emperor's isolated, joyless life of gloomy watchfulness and sinister machinations (malas curas). The latter presumably are meant to refer to the preparation of treason charges (cf. III.38.1).
- 10) Ann. I.73.5
- 11) Dio, R.H., LVII.18.2
- 12) Ann. VI.2.5
- 13) Suetonius, Tiberius, LI.1
- 14) Ann. IV.52.1-6
- 15) Dio says: frequently (LVII.11.5). Cf. Suetonius, Tiberius, LXXII.2
- 16) Suetonius, Tiberius, XI.3; Ann. IV.58.1
- 17) Ann. VI.50; Suetonius, Tiberius, LXXII
- 18) Ann. I.8:6
- 19) Ann. I.75.6
- 20) Ann. VI.13
- 21) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 224
- 22) Ann. III.65.3





- 23) Marsh, F.B., opcit., p. 224
- 24) Suetonius, Tiberius, XXXII.1; Dio, R.H., LVII.11.7
- 25) Suetonius, Tiberius, LXVII.4
- 26) Ann. IV.6.7
- 27) Augustus' repeated suggestions about resigning part or all of his power is a point, which, in my opinion, would be worthy of further examination; but since in this thesis I am dealing with Tiberius, this brief reference is all that I am making at this time.
- 28) Marsh, F.B., op.cit., p. 46
- 29) Ibid.



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